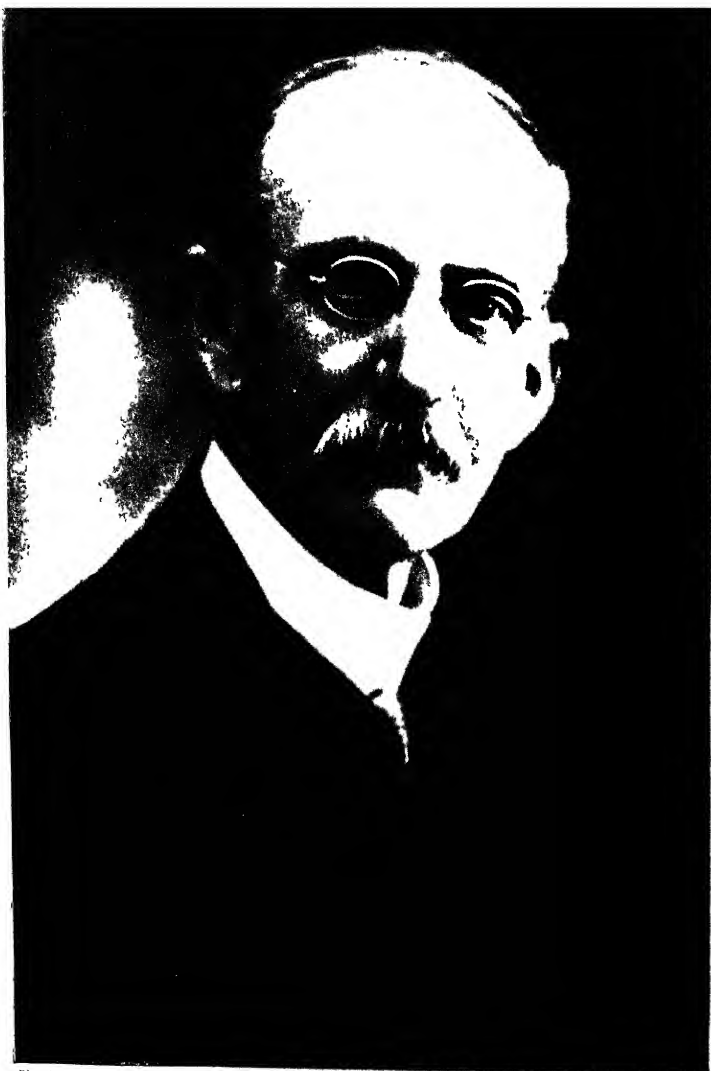

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REMINISCENCES OF A SOUTH
AFRICAN PIONEER



Photo]

[W. H. L. & Co. N. Y. & L. & L.]

Sincerely yours

W. H. L.

REMINISCENCES
OF A
SOUTH AFRICAN PIONEER
(1ST SERIES—"WANDERJAHRE")

BY
WILLIAM CHARLES SCULLY
AUTHOR OF
"BY VELD'T AND KOPJE," "KAHIR STORIES," "THE RIDGE OF THE WHITE WATERS,"
"BETWEEN SUN AND SAND," ETC., ETC

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

First published in 1913

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“Ignoranti quem portum petat, nullus suus ventus est.”

SENECA.

To
ELAINE, GERALD, ERNEST, MIRIAM, LILLA, AND BETTY,
THIS RECORD OF
THEIR FATHER'S EARLY WANDERINGS OVER THE
YET-UNVEILED FACE OF SOUTH AFRICA
IS INSCRIBED

FOREWORD

THE reminiscences set down in this volume have been published serially, in *The State of South Africa*, in a more or less abridged form, under the title of "Unconventional Reminiscences." They are mainly autobiographical. This has been inevitable; in any narrative based upon personal experience, an attempt to efface oneself would tend to weaken vitality.

Having lived for upwards of forty-five years in South Africa—usually in parts remote from those settled areas which have attained a measure of civilization—and having been a wide wanderer in my early days, it has been my fortune to witness many interesting events and to be brought into contact with many strong men. Occasionally, as in the case of the earlier discoveries of gold and diamonds, I have drifted, a pipkin among pots, close to the centre around which the immediate interests of the country seemed to revolve.

Foreword

The period mainly dealt with is that magical one when South Africa—unnoted and obscure—was startled from the simplicity of her bucolic life by the discovery of gold and diamonds. This was, of course, some years before the fountains of her boundless potential wealth had become fully unscaled. I was one of that band of light-hearted, haphazard pioneers who, rejoicing in youthful energy and careless of their own interests, unwittingly laid the foundation upon which so many great fortunes have been built.

An ancient myth relates how the god Dionysus decreed that everything touched by Midas, the Phrygian king, should turn into gold, but the effect was so disastrous that Midas begged for a reversal of the decree. The prayer was granted, conditionally upon the afflicted king bathing in the River Pactolus.

South Africa may, in a sense, be paralleled with Midas—both as regards the bane of gold and the antidote of bathing—but her Pactolus has been one of blood.

Midas again got into trouble by refusing to adjudge in the matter of musical merit between Pan and Apollo, and this time was punished by having his ears changed into those of an ass.

Foreword

Our choice lies before us; may we avoid the ass's ears by boldly making a decision. May we evade a worse thing by unhesitatingly giving our award in favour of Apollo.

With this apologia I submit my humble gleanings from fields on which no more the sun will shine, to the indulgent sympathy of readers.

W. C. S.

PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA,

January, 1913

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REMINISCENCES OF A SOUTH AFRICAN PIONEER

CHAPTER I

My father's family—"Old Rody"—Dualla—A cruel experiment—"Old Rody" and the goose—Cook and kitchen-maid—Scull and monkey—My mother's family—Abbey-view—The Rock of Cashel—Captain Meagher and early chess—Sir Dominic Corrigan—"Old Mary" and the sugar—Naval ambitions—Harper Twelvetre and the burial agency.

I WAS born on the 29th of October, 1855; at least I have been told so, but the register of my baptism cannot be traced. This circumstance placed me in a somewhat awkward position a few years since, when proof of my age was urgently required. The place of my birth is a house in Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin—then the home of my maternal uncle-by-marriage, Richard Scott. Evil days have since fallen upon that part of Ireland's metropolis; the locality is now inhabited by a class of people to whom

Reminiscences of a

we should in this country apply the term "poor whites." When I recently visited the spot I found that the house had, like most of those in the vicinity, been divided into tenements. The upper portion of what had once been a frosted-glass partition was still in the hall, and on this my uncle's crest was visible. The premises were in a filthy condition, and the inhabitants looked more than ordinarily villainous. On the steps a red-faced crone sat pulling at a clay pipe, and a reek of stale porter came through the hall doorway.

My father's family, I am told, have been located in the County Tipperary for many generations. I believe they made a great deal of money, as contractors to the army, of King William in the campaign of which the Battle of the Boyne was the decisive event, but the greater part of this they dissipated about a century ago in lawsuits. I have heard that the costs in one case they lost amounted to over £100,000. The little I know of the family, has been told me by dear old Sir William Butler, with whom I became very intimate when he was in South Africa. He always said we were related—that we were "Irish cousins"—but we never were quite able to define what the relation-

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ship was. Sir William and my father had been great friends in the old days.

I have been told by a relative that the many Scullys who are scattered over the south of Ireland fall into two categories—the round-headed and the long-headed; that the former are, as a rule, fairly well off, but that the latter are usually poor. I regret to say that I belong to the long-headed branch.

My paternal grandfather was a soldier, and my father was brought up by Rodolph Scully, of Dualla. “Old Rody,” who kept a pack of harriers which my father hunted, was a well-known character in South Tipperary. He departed this life when I was about six years old—yet I seem to remember him very clearly. A small, wiry, dapper man with a clean-shaven red face, a cold, light-blue eye and fiercely beetling brows, he occasionally filled my early childhood with terror. He usually wore knee-breeches, buckled shoes, a frieze coat, and a white choker. He had a most furious temper, and was consequently dreaded by his relations and his domestics. I remember once seeing him administer a terrible thrashing with a hunting-crop to a stable-boy for some trivial fault.

My recollections of Dualla are very faint;

Reminiscences of a

such fragmentary ones as survive are almost solely connected with its kennels and stables. There was, I know, a turret at one end of the house. I believe the original idea was to build a castle, but on account of scarcity of funds the construction was continued on less ambitious architectural lines. An unpleasant story used to be told in connection with this turret, which was of considerable height. Old Rody, one night when in his cups, made a bet that a goat, thrown from the top, would land uninjured on its feet. The cruel experiment was tried. It may be some satisfaction to know that Old Rody had to pay the bet, but it would be more if we knew that he had been made to follow the poor animal.

Once my people were on a visit to Dualla. Old Rody, who was much addicted to the pleasures of the table, was especially fond of roast goose. This, to satisfy him, had to be done to a particular turn. On the occasion in question the bird was brought to table slightly overdone, so Old Rody told the butler to retire and send up the cook. No sooner had the butler left the room than Old Rody picked up the goose by its shanks and took his stand behind the door. A dreadful silence reigned ; the guests were as though stiffened into stone. The

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cook — a stout, red-faced woman — entered the room in evident trepidation, wiping her face with her apron. As she passed her master, he lifted the goose and hit her over the head with it as hard as he could. The bird smashed to pieces, and the woman, covered with gravy and seasoning, fled back, wailing, to the kitchen.

On another occasion a neighbour, whose name happened to be Cook, came to spend the day at Dualla. He brought with him his two children, a boy and a girl, of whom he was inordinately proud. Old Rody and Cook were sitting on the terrace, drinking punch; the children were playing on the lawn.

"Now, Scully," said the proud parent, pointing to his boy, "isn't he a regular Cook?"

"Oh! begor' he is," replied Old Rody, "and the other's a regular kitchen-maid."

Near the close of a not at all reputable career Old Rody "found it most convenient" to marry his housemaid. He survived the ceremony only a few months. His widow, disappointed in her expectations of wealth—for the estate cut up very badly, indeed—emigrated to Australia, where, I believe, she soon married again.

There is a story told of Vincent Scully, (father of the present owner of Mantlehill House, near

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Cashel), who was a Member of Parliament for, I think, North Cork, which I do not remember to have seen in print. Another M.P., whose name was Monk, had a habit of clipping, where possible, the last syllable from the surnames of his intimate friends. One day, he met Vincent Scully, in the House of Commons, and addressed him --

“Well, Scull, how are you to-day?”

“Quite well, thank you, Monk,” replied Scully; “but I cannot conceive why, you should snip a syllable from my, name, unless you wish to add it to your own.”

My father quarrelled with Old Rody, so went to Italy, where he had some relations. He meant to remain for a few months only, but it was upwards of six years before he returned. He then read law for a while. Getting tired of this, he went “back to the land.”

My mother was a Creagh, from Clare. Creaghs used to be plentiful in both Clare and Limerick. The civic records of Limerick City, show that for many generations they took a prominent part in local municipal affairs. My mother's father was a soldier too. The Creaghs have always favoured the army. A few years ago eight of my mother's first-cousins were soldiers. At the Battle of Blaauwberg—just before the capitulation



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of the Cape in January, 1806 — a Lieutenant Creagh was slightly wounded. This was either my grandfather or my grand-uncle, Sir Michael Creagh. Both brothers were in the same regiment, the 86th Foot, or “Royal County Downs.” *

My earliest recollections are of Abbeyview, near Cashel, where we lived until the early sixties. The celebrated “Rock,” with its many monuments and the grand ruins of its once-spacious abbey, were visible from our front windows. We had another place, not far off, called Clahalea. I remember that the ploughing there used to be done with Italian buffaloes.

In the early sixties we moved to a place called Springfield, situate just at the northern outlet of the “Scalp,” a very rugged pass in the Wicklow Hills. The stream which divides Wicklow County from that of Dublin ran through a small portion of the place, the house being on the Dublin side.

As I suffered from weak health up to my twelfth year, I was not allowed to go to school; consequently I ran wild. I was seven years old when I learnt to read, but it was a long time before I could write. There was a small lake on

* I have since writing the above ascertained that it was my grand-uncle who was wounded.

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the estate which was full of fish ; every stream contained trout. The hills abounded in rabbits and hares ; in a larch-forest, since cut away, were woodcock. Pheasants used often to stray over from Lord Powerscourt's demesne, which was separated from our ground by a much-broken fence. These my father strictly forbade me to snare, but I fear I did not always obey him. Pheasants roasted in the depths of the larch-wood, and flavoured with the salt of secrecy, were appetizing indeed.

One ridiculous incident of my childhood suggests itself. For a boy of eight I was a fair chess-player. A friend and distant relative of ours, Captain Meagher — brother of Thomas Francis Meagher, who was a general in the Confederate Army during the American War — stayed for a time at an inn in the village of Enniskerry, which was two or three miles away. He was a frequent visitor, and I used to continually worry him to play chess. One day he told me that he never played this game except very early in the morning, and that if I would come down some day at 5 a.m. he would have a game with me.

But poor Captain Meagher little knew who he was dealing with. Next morning, at a quarter

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to five, I was in the street in front of the inn. The season must have been early spring or late autumn, for it was pitch-dark and very cold. I trotted up and down the village street, chess-board and chessmen in hand, trying to keep myself warm until five o'clock struck. Then I went to the inn door and sounded a loud rat-tat with the knocker. No one answered, so I knocked still louder. At length I heard a slow and laborious shuffling of feet in the passage, and an old woman, wrapped in a patchwork quilt and wearing a white nightcap, opened the door. She regarded me with hardly subdued fury.

"Phwat d'ye want?" she asked.

"I've come to play chess with Captain Meagher," I replied.

"Oh! glory be to God!" she gasped, and tried to shut the door in my face. But I dodged under her elbow and fled up the stairs, for I knew my friend's room. The woman followed, ejaculating mixed prayers and curses. I tried the Captain's door, but it was locked, so I thundered on the panel and roared for admittance. I shall never forget the look of dismay on the poor man's face when I told him what I had come for. However, he was very nice over the matter; he made the old woman light a fire

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and provide me with hot milk and bread. But my disappointment was bitter when I found that he was quite ignorant of the game of chess.

The most celebrated physician in the Dublin of those days was Sir Dominic Corrigan, who, however, was as much famed for his brusqueness towards patients as for his skill. Being in weak health, I was often taken to him, but he invariably treated me with the utmost kindness. However, a highly respectable maiden-aunt of mine had a somewhat different experience. She went to consult him. After sounding her—none too gently—and asking a few questions, he relapsed into silence. Then, after a pause of meditation, he said—

“Well, ma’am, it’s one of two things : either you drink or else you sit with your back to the fire.”

In one of the outhouses at Springfield dwelt an old woman—a superannuated servant. I remember her under the name of “Old Mary.” The room she occupied was small, and contained but little furniture. Yet it was always neat and as clean as a new pin. Old Mary used to sit all day long in a high armchair, knitting, and with a black cat asleep on her lap. She was a terrible tea-drinker, and was very fond of me,

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but I ill-requited her kindness by continually plundering her sugar-bowl. The latter she took to hiding, but I, engaging her the time in airy conversation, used to ransack the premises until I found it. Eventually, it became a game of skill between the hider and the seeker. I can now see the old woman's eyes over the rims of her spectacles as she laid her knitting down and ruefully regarded the development of the search. But at this game, owing to the restricted area, I always won.

I went away on a visit ; soon after my return I went to call on Old Mary. To my surprise, there stood the brown earthenware sugar-bowl, half-full, unconcealed upon the table. After a few minutes I stretched forth my hand to help myself to its contents. Old Mary looked at me, and said in a deep, serious voice—

“Masther Willie.”

“Yes,” I replied.

“I always spits in me sugar.”

Horror-struck, I rose and fled.

It was, I think, in my tenth year that I determined to join the Royal Navy. An uncle of mine had presented me with Captain Marryat's novels complete in one immense volume. I felt that a life on the ocean wave was the only one

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worth living. Accordingly I offered my services to the Admiralty as a midshipman. As I could not write (a fact I felt myself justified in concealing from the First Lord), I got old Micky Nolan, who was employed as a clerk in the village bakery, to pen the application for me. Micky, who had seen better days, was quite a capable scribe—when sober.

My qualifications for the post applied for were set forth in full. I was, I said, quite an expert navigator, my experience having been gained in a boat on the Springfield lake. But I candidly confessed that my parents were unaware of the step I had determined to take, and accordingly requested that a reply might be sent to Michael Nolan, Esq. For several weary weeks I trudged daily to the bakery, vainly hoping for an answer.

Having for some time felt the pinch of increasing poverty, I was keenly anxious to obtain some lucrative employment. One day I read an advertisement in the *Freeman's Journal* which seemed to offer an opening towards a competence. For the moderate sum of one shilling (which might be remitted in postage stamps if convenient to the sender) a plan for earning a liberal livelihood would be revealed. There was no room

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for any doubt ; the thing was described as an absolute certainty. An easy, congenial, reputable employment, not requiring any special educational qualifications—why, the thing would have been cheap at hundreds of pounds. Yet here it was going begging for a shilling. In my case, however, the shilling was the great difficulty. My sole sources of pocket-money were the sale of holly-berries for Christmas festivities — florists used to send carts from Dublin and pay, as much as three shillings per load—and a royalty of a penny per head which I used to collect from rabbit-snarers who worked with ferrets. But Christmas was far off, and rabbits were breeding, so my golden opportunity of acquiring an easy competence would probably be lost by delay.

My parents were unaccountably unsympathetic ; they absolutely refused to provide the shilling. But a friend heard of my plight (not, however, from myself), and furnished the cash. He little knew the misery he was calling down on my unsophisticated head.

I posted the shilling's-worth of stamps to the specified address and awaited a reply in a fever of anticipation. Within a few days it arrived ; we were sitting at breakfast when the letter was delivered. My heart swelled with joyous

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expectation. Now I would show my sceptical relations how wrong-headed they had been in thwarting my legitimate ambitions towards making a start in life; now I was about to taste the sweets of independence.

The missive was bulky. As my trembling fingers tore open the envelope, a number of closely printed slips fell out. I read these, one by one, with a reeling brain. Then I laid my head on the table and burst into bitter tears. My stately castle of hope had tumbled to pieces, and I was buried beneath its ruins.

The circulars were signed by one "Harper Twelvetre" ; the printed slips outlined a scheme for establishing a burial agency. I had to open an office at the nearest village and, when I heard of a death, direct the attention of the bereaved to one or other of the undertakers in the vicinity. For thus obtaining custom I was to claim a commission on the funeral expenses. This ghoulish suggestion was the sole outcome of my sanguine expectations.

It is hardly too much to say that this matter caused me deeper and more long-drawn-out misery than any other episode of a somewhat chequered career. I have dwelt on it at length because I think the relation reveals a moral. At

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that breakfast-table began a course of torture which lasted for several years. To say I was chaffed by every one, from my father and mother down to old Larry Frane, an ex-soldier who occupied the lodge at our big gate, gives no idea of the true state of things. The ridicule was continuous, searching, and universal. I was the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood. Anonymous letters from supposed persons in a moribund condition, offering to guarantee the delivery of their prospective remains in consideration of a small immediate advance, reached me from various quarters. If I went into a hayfield, one labourer would speak to another, somewhat in this fashion—

“Jerry, have ye heerd that ould Biddy McGrath was prayed for on Sunday?”

This would be accompanied by a meaning look at me. I would stalk off with apparent unconcern, seeking some place where I could fall unseen to the ground and weep. I was afraid to go to Mass at the little upland chapel at Glencullen. It is usual in Roman Catholic churches to pray for the welfare of departed souls and for the recovery of those people afflicted with sickness who are thought to be in danger. I used to imagine that the priest glanced meaningly at me when he made announcements on these subjects. This,

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of course, was nonsense, but several times I noticed members of the congregation looking at me and tittering.

I became solitary in my habits, for I dreaded meeting a human being. For a time my health suffered to a serious degree. My tribulations increased to such an extent that I seriously contemplated suicide. I am convinced that this period left an indelible mark, and that not an improving one, on my character. Where sensitive children are concerned, chaff may be useful in hardening them, but it should not be carried beyond a certain point.

CHAPTER II

Improved health—Jimmy Kinsella—Veld food—I abscond—
Father Healy on conversion—Father O'Dwyer and his
whip—Confession—Construction of a volcano—The
Fenian outbreak—Departure for South Africa—The tune-
ful soldier—Chess at sea—Madeira—A gale—The *Asia*.

My health having improved in my eleventh year, I was able to extend the range of my walks abroad. The surrounding country was full of interest; the scenery was lovely. The region through which the boundary common to Wicklow and Dublin runs is full of beauty spots, and the deeper one penetrates into Wicklow, the more delightful is the landscape. The Dargle, Powerscourt Waterfall, Bray Head, and the Sugarloaf Mountains were all within rambling distance of Springfield. A few miles away, on the Dublin side, were various ruins full of rusting machinery. These had been the sites of paper and flax mills, shut down owing to England's fiscal policy of the early nineteenth century days. Lead-smelting and shot-making was carried on at a spot a

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few miles to the eastward. It was a great delight to see the melted metal poured through a sieve at the top of a tower and raining down into an excavation with water at the bottom. I remember the manager of the works once showing me an immense ingot of silver. It was lying on a table in his office between two flannel shirts, the edges of which were just able to meet over its sides. There was a small lake and a trout stream close to the works ; of these I had the run.

Many spots in the neighbourhood of Springfield had legends attached to them. I remember one large rock in the Scalp which was known as the "Soggarth's Stone." It was said that a priest had been killed there in "ninety-eight." At a spot where two roads crossed, on the way to Enniskerry, could still be traced the outlines of the graves of several suicides ; one of these had the remains of a very old oaken stake sticking diagonally from it. Every storied spot fascinated me, but although many of my friends among the peasantry tried hard to make me believe in the fairies — or, as they called them, "the good people"—I never placed the slightest credence in what was said on the subject.

I had a faithful henchman in Jimmy Kinsella, a lad of about my own age, who belonged to

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Springfield. Jimmy, was the only one of my circle of acquaintances who refrained from persecuting me concerning the "burial agency" episode. Should these lines ever meet his eye, he will know that I still cherish grateful memories of his chivalrous forbearance. But I fear poor Jimmy could never have learnt to read; he was one of a sorely poverty-stricken family of about a dozen children. His ordinary costume consisted of a very ragged coat and breeches, the latter not quite reaching to his knees, and usually, held at their proper altitude by a "suggan," or rope of hay. Jimmy, was the only well-fleshed member of his family, and for being thus distinguished he had me to thank.

I must, as a child, have had the forager's instinct very strongly developed, for I very early noted the amount of more or less appetizing food lying about ungleaned in what, in South Africa, we would call "the veld." For instance, there was a large grove of hazel-trees from which vast stores of nuts could be collected in the season. This nut-grove was still standing when I visited Springfield a few years ago. These nuts we used to gather and, like the squirrels, hoard in various places.

The seasons brought forth other acceptable

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items of food. Mushrooms grew plentifully in the grassy hollows near the lake, and wild strawberries were to be found on almost every southern slope. There was one small area where the strawberries grew in wonderful profusion. A few years since I revisited this spot in spring. I found the fruit as plentiful as ever, but somehow the flavour of the strawberry did not seem to be so rich as it was five-and-forty years ago. Blackberries were abundant on the edge of every thicket ; on the heights of the Scalp, over which we poached without restraint, haws and sloes grew plentifully. It must not be inferred that Jimmy and I did not lay the garden under levy, for we did. Apples, pears, gooseberries, and such common fruits, we helped ourselves to freely, but I had given my word not to touch any of the rare varieties—such as plums and greengages. These were trained, vine-wise, along the walls.

But we seldom lacked animal food, for we could always snare rabbits or, except in the depths of winter, catch fish. The lake was full of perch, roach, and eels ; every mountain stream contained trout. On rare occasions we would find Lord Powerscourt's pheasants in our snares. I am sorry to say that in winter we would eat

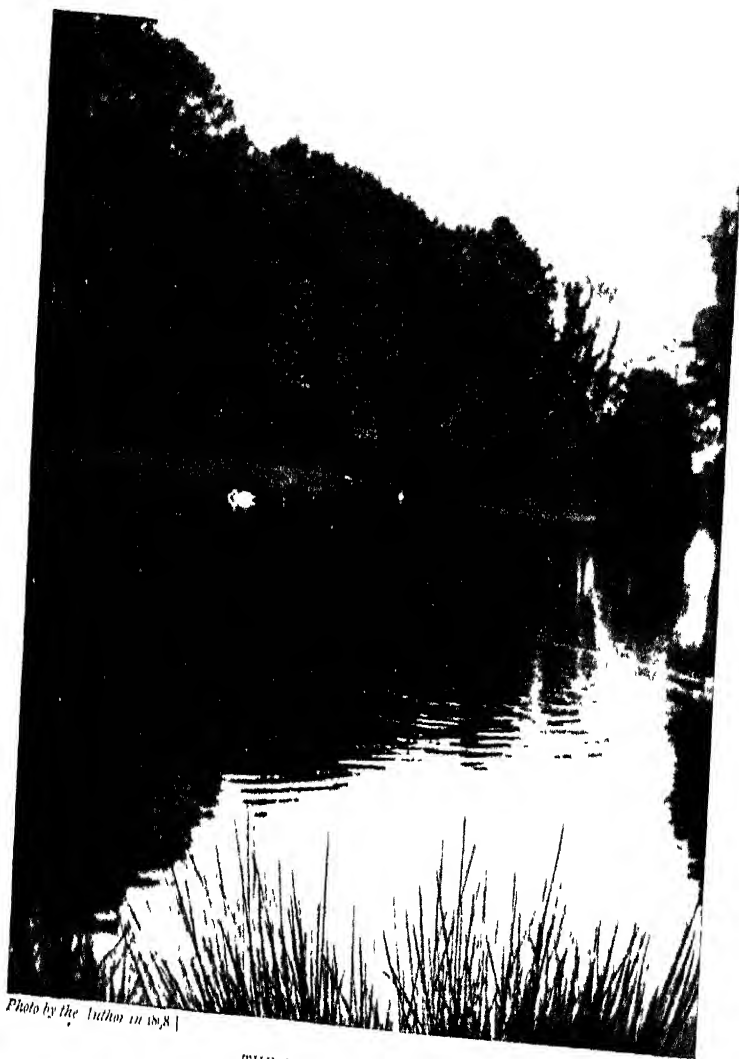


Photo by the Author in 1898

THE LAKE, SPRINGFIELD.

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blackbirds, which we caught in a crib made of elder-rods. This I always knew to be a disgraceful thing to do, and it was only when very hungry indeed that such a crime was committed.

Tired of the ways of society, Jimmy and I determined to have done with civilization, so we built, with infinite pains and some measure of skill, a large hut in the deepest and loneliest part of the larch-forest. Larch-boughs and bracken were the materials used. To this hut I surreptitiously conveyed a few utensils such as knives, mugs, etcetera, as well as a change of clothing and some cast-off garments as a fresh outfit for Jimmy. We disappeared early one afternoon, and, after a lordly feast of roast rabbit and mushrooms, sank to sleep on a fragrant bed of carefully selected fronds of dry bracken.

At about midnight I awoke with the glare of a lantern in my eyes. My father had come with a search-party, and I was led, howling with wrath and disappointment, back to the haunts of conventional men. My absence had not been thought remarkable until ten o'clock had struck. Then a messenger was despatched to make inquiries at the Kinsella cottage. Patsy, one of Jimmy's numerous brethren, betrayed us. He had, a few days previously, followed our

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tracks to the secret lair. Poor Patsy, subsequently had reason to regret his treachery.

One escapade of Jimmy's and mine nearly had serious consequences. I had been reading about volcanoes, so was filled with ambition to construct one. I unearthed a large powder-horn, belonging to my father, which must have contained nearly a pound of gunpowder. This I poured into a tin, which I punctured at the side. Into the puncture I inserted a fuse of rolled brown paper which had been soaked in a solution of saltpetre. The tin was placed on the floor in the middle of the tool-house ; around it we banked damp clay in the form of a truncated cone, leaving a hollow for the crater. The latter we filled with dry sand and fragments of brick. We lit the fuse, and, as might have been expected, a frightful explosion resulted. The windows were blown completely out of the tool-house. Jimmy and I were flung against the wall and nearly blinded. Several fragments of brick had to be dug out of our respective faces.

Father Healy, celebrated as a wit, occasionally visited our house. His church at Little Bray was noted for the excellence of its choir. The following story, was told of this priest : He was one night dining with an Anglican clergyman,

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with whom he was on intimate terms. Just previously two Roman Catholic priests—one in England and the other in Ireland—had joined the Anglican communion. This double event, which came up as a topic of conversation at the dinner-table, was, naturally enough, the occasion of some satisfaction to the host. Various views as to the psychology of conversion or, according to one's point of view, perversion, were mooted. Various possible motives, spiritual and temporal, underlying such a change, were discussed. Eventually, the host asked Father Healy for his opinion.

“Faith!” replied the latter, “I don't think there's any mystery about the thing at all.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, when one of our men goes over to you, it's always due to one of two causes.”

“What are they?”

“Punch or Judy,” replied Father Healy laconically.

Although Glencullen Chapel was the nearest to Springfield, the house was in the parish of Enniskerry. Here a certain Father O'Dwyer was the incumbent. Father O'Dwyer was a very irascible man of powerful physique; he was as much feared by the godly as by the ungodly.

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He kept a big whip in the vestry, with which to chastise evil-doers ; of this I had ocular demonstration.

One Sunday, when High Mass was being celebrated by another priest—a stranger—I was sitting in the carriage, which stood waiting for the conclusion of the ceremony, in the road outside. I had attended early Mass, and arranged to drive home with my people. A number of boys were playing marbles outside the church-yard wall, in a blind alley. The vestry door opened and Father O'Dwyer came out, clad in his soutane and carrying the well-known whip. He crouched and crept along the wall, out through the gate and to the entrance of the alley. The boys were so intent upon their game that they never noticed his approach until he was close upon them. Then they sprang up with wild yells, but the lash descended on them like a well-aimed flail ; they rolled over and over in a writhing heap. After the heap had broken up and its shrieking units scattered, the irate priest calmly pocketed the marbles and, whip in hand, stalked back to the vestry.

Confession to Father O'Dwyer was an ordeal much dreaded by the younger members of our family. As we were his parishioners, he expected

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us to attend to our religious duties at his church, but we endeavoured by every possible subterfuge to perform such at Glencullen, where the priest was more sympathetic.

My father used to tell a story of the confessional which always amused us. When a boy he occasionally visited relations in Dublin who were exact in the matter of regular confession. It was, in fact, the rule of the household that not alone every member, but the stranger within its gates, should confess each Saturday night. As it is on Saturday night that most people confess, a number of penitents were usually sitting in church awaiting their respective turns. On one occasion my father was sitting near a cubicle into which a rather disreputable woman had just entered. He heard the muttering of the voices of the priest and the penitent alternately; once or twice the former emitted a long, low whistle, indicative of extreme surprise.

Another story was told me by a relative. The episode is said to have occurred at Cashel, but I do not guarantee it in any respect. Whether it is true or not does not much matter.

Part of the ritual of confession is this: The penitent repeats a formula of three sentences: "Mea culpa—mea culpa—mea maxima culpa,"

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striking the breast with the closed hand as each sentence is uttered. On this occasion the words of the penitent, an old countrywoman, could be distinctly heard outside the cubicle. They were: "Mea culpa, mea—oh ! dammit—I've bruk me poipe."

In 1867 befel the Fenian outbreak. At Glencullen, about a mile from the back of our house, was a police barrack. This was attacked one night, but not captured, although the valiant attackers forced some of their prisoners to stand in the line of fire, between them and the building. The police had closed the windows with featherbeds and mattresses, and these the Fenian bullets could not penetrate. Within a few days the fiasco of a rising was at an end. I do not think any of the people in our neighbourhood joined it. When the rebels retreated along the Wicklow road, they threw several pikes over the wall close to our lodge gates. The preference on the part of the Irishman of the last generation for the pike as a fighting implement was remarkable. He regarded it as quite superior to the rifle.

My father had never been well off ; each passing year had left him more and more deeply involved. In 1867 a disastrous lawsuit with the Marquis of Bute over some mining

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rights in Wales almost brought ruin to our door. It was decided to emigrate. The advantages of New Zealand, Buenos Ayres, and South Africa were all considered. But a letter from Cardinal (then Bishop) Moran, of Grahamstown, decided our fate: the Cape Colony was to be our destination.

My three sisters were all senior to me. The eldest accompanied us to the Cape. The second had, the previous year, gone to India. The youngest, who was in delicate health, remained behind with an aunt. My brother, who was younger than I, stayed at school in Ireland.

So one lovely day, in early November of 1867 we embarked at Dublin on a small paddle-steamer called the *Lady Eglinton*. Our immediate destination was Falmouth; there we had to join the s.s. *Asia*, one of the old "Diamond Line." Memory is a curious thing; although I can recall minute details of most of my uneventful life between my sixth and twelfth years, the circumstances of this voyage—the first in my experience—have passed almost entirely away. The only memory that remains is connected with a ridiculous episode.

There was a drunken Irish soldier on board. He was a good-natured creature who made him-

Reminiscences of a

self most embarrassingly friendly towards all and sundry of the passengers. Eventually he tried to embrace one of the ladies. For this misdemeanour, which I am persuaded was based on no evil intention, he was trussed and tied down on the hatch, close to the wheel. But the man must have been a philosopher, for his bonds distressed him not at all. For several hours he lifted up his voice in continuous song. His repertoire was extensive and varied. To this day I can clearly recall the words as well as the tune of two of his ditties. One related to the history of a pair of corduroy breeches, year by year, since the close of the last decade, each year being treated of in a couplet. The first verse ran thus :—

“In eighteen hundred and sixty-one
Those corduroy breeches were begun,”

Eventually, in the then current year, 1867—

“Those corduroy breeches went up to heaven.”

But they, must have come down again, for it was prophetically related that, in 1868—

“Those corduroy breeches lost their sate.”

Following this came a lyric, having for its

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theme the pangs of despised love and the faithlessness of the fair. Its refrain ran :—

“ Oh, surely the wimmin is worse than the min,
For they go to the Divil and come back agin.”

Towards the afternoon the minstrel sank into slumber. To judge by the expression of his face his dreams must have been happy ones.

The *Asia* was awaiting us at Falmouth. By the light of subsequent experience I now know her to have been a very second-class craft—even for the sixties—but to me then she was an Argo bound for a Colchis, where a Golden Fleece awaited every seeker. There were a number of Cape colonists on board. Among them may be mentioned Mr. and Mrs. “Varsy” Van der Byl, the Rev. Mr. (now Canon) Woodrooffe and his wife, Mr. Templar Horne—who was afterwards Surveyor-General — and Mr. D. Krynauw, who still enjoys life in his comfortable home just off Wandel Street, Cape Town. Mr. Krynauw added to the gaiety of the community by making clever thumb-nail sketches of all and sundry. But Mr. Woodrooffe was the life and soul of the ship. He seemed to have as many accomplishments as the celebrated Father O’Flynn, with several more thrown in.

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Among his other acquirements Mr. Woodrooffe had an excellent knowledge of chess ; he was, in fact, by far the best player on board. I often challenged him to play, but he considered a small boy such as I was to be beneath his notice, so kept putting me off. However, one day I happened to be sitting in the saloon, with the chessmen in their places on the board, waiting for a victim. Mr. Woodrooffe chanced to come out of his cabin, so I captured him. But no sooner had we begun to play than two charming young ladies appeared and, one on each side, engaged my opponent in a conversation which, naturally, enough, was more interesting than chess with me. Accordingly, he paid little or no attention to the game. I, on the other hand, was in deadly earnest.

I moved out my king's pawn ; then the king's bishop ; then the queen. My heart was in my mouth ; surely so experienced a player was not going to walk open-eyed into such a booby-trap. But the sirens had lured his attention away. Next move I gave him "fool's mate." That moment was one of the proudest of my life ; I had beaten the champion, the Admirable Crichton of games of skill, the man whose word was law in all matters relating to sport in our little community.

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Unfortunately, however, I was too young and inexperienced to support my triumph with becoming dignity. I rushed up the companion-stair shouting the news of my victory at the top of my voice. I told it to the captain, the officers, the passengers, and to such members of the crew as I was acquainted with. But I was astute enough never again to offer to play chess with Mr. Woodrooffe, and even to decline when he suggested our having a return game.

The Biscayan tides were kind ; but no sooner had we passed Finisterre than a gale struck us, and for many woeful days the *Asia* behaved like a drunken porpoise. I do not think a single passenger escaped sea-sickness. The gale continued until the night before we reached Madeira. I shall never forget the enchanting prospect which Funchal afforded as we glided to our anchorage in the early morning. The misery of the previous week was forgotten in the rapture of a moment. The sky was cloudless and the contours of the lovely island were bathed in opaline light. What joy the first sight, smell, and taste of the tropical fruits brought. Cold storage, by bringing all descriptions of exotic fruit to Europe, has robbed travel towards the tropics of one of its keenest delights.

We passed to the westward of Teneriffe in

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perfectly clear weather. The recent storms encountered by us had extended far to the south ; consequently the great peak was clothed in dazzling snow to an unusual distance below its summit. The impression left on my memory by that mountain mass, with the snow-mantle glowing in the rose-red light of sunset, will never fade. I can well remember being sadly disappointed at the first view of the Southern Cross.

The voyage was uneventful until we reached the vicinity of the Cape, where we again encountered a most violent south-west gale. For two days we steamed against a tremendous sea. Wave after wave swept our decks ; all the passengers had to remain below. I remember the ladies sitting huddled together at night in the companion, and the ship's doctor (I think his name was Williamson) regaling them with gruesome tales of shipwreck until the more nervous of the listeners began to wail aloud. So bad was the storm, that cooking was almost suspended. The menu consisted solely of "scapie"—a comestible apparently composed of lumps of salt-beef stuck into slabs of very tough dough, and the result boiled in a hurried and perfunctory manner. Two days after the cessation of the storm, the *Asia* steamed into Table Bay.

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The *Asia*, poor old tub, lies at the bottom of the Bay of Bengal, where she foundered with all hands when engaged in the cattle-trade. Peace to her iron bones. Most of my fellow-Argonauts, long before this, must have sunk into that sleep from which there is no earthly waking. Few, if any of us, managed to find the Golden Fleece. Those who, like myself, are still seeking it, are treading that downhill path which grows steeper at every pace, and which leads to that valley, filled with grey shadow, out of which none return. To them I hold out a hand of greeting in the spirit. Perhaps, when the Great Cycle has been traversed, we may meet again. Perhaps in another Argo we may voyage from Sirius to Mazaroth, through seas of golden ether—adventurers from world to world instead of from continent to continent.

CHAPTER III

Arrival at Cape Town—Port Elizabeth—First encounter with large game—Grahamstown—Severe thunderstorm—King William's Town—Natives and their ponies—Social peculiarities—Farming—The annual trek—Camp-life—Surf-bathing—Self-sacrificing attitude of Larry O'Toole—Capture of an ant-bear—The coast scenery—A moral shock—School—Chief Toise—Rainy seasons—Flooded rivers.

It was about the middle of December when we reached Table Bay. With the exception of the old Slave Barracks, in which the Supreme Court sits, I do not think a single one of the present Adderley Street buildings existed. Bree Street is more or less unchanged, but immediately to the eastward of it modernization begins. The most interesting building to me was the old Fruit Market, facing the Parade. I think it stood on the present site of the Drill Hall. The variety of strange fruits there to be found, the grotesque dresses of the Malays, and the babel of uncouth speech exercised a fascination the memory of which has never faded.

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The costume of the average Malay woman has remained unchanged ; it is surely the most hideous of the many sumptuary hideosities for which fashion is responsible. This is the more deplorable for that the Malay women, when young, are often extremely pretty. The colour-scheme they affect is good ; these women usually dress in light, flimsy silks of varied hue. Such materials are used—at all events among the well-to-do—for skirt, bodice, kerchief, and coiffure. But under the skirt, which hangs from just below the arm-pits, there must be at least a dozen petticoats. The result is a figure resembling a misshapen cone. I believe this costume is an exaggerated imitation of that of the “ merchant’s ” wife of a little more than a century ago, and that it was adopted by the Malays when the Dutch sumptuary laws were repealed.

We were hospitably entertained by the families of some friends we had made on the voyage. One day we spent with the Hams, an old Cape family whose homestead, long since “ improved ” away, stood not far from the present site of the Mount Nelson Hotel. Constantia, also, we visited, and were presented with some of the famous wine there grown.

At this time the only railway in South Africa

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was a single line between Cape Town and Wynberg. It was said, but I do not know with how much truth, that the building of this line was due to the accidental circumstance that a ship, bound for Australia with railway material, was wrecked in the vicinity of the Cape.

After a delay of about a week we set sail for Port Elizabeth, the end of our voyage. We left considerably more than half of our passengers in Cape Town. The parting with some of these was a sad experience ; during the course of the long voyage we had made many friends. We reached Port Elizabeth on Christmas Eve, and were carried ashore through the surf by natives. Immediately after landing, we passed a yard full of old lumber. Protruding from a chaos of ancient rubbish was a signboard, bearing in dingy letters the legend : " Joseph Scully, Coach Painter." This is the only occasion upon which I have come across my name in South Africa. We landed at once, but some of the passengers elected to remain on board the *Asia* until next morning. This they had ample cause to regret, for a severe south-easter set in during the night and rendered communication with the shore impossible for several days.

Port Elizabeth, although then a thriving town,



PORT ELIZABETH IN THE SIXTIES.

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had not yet earned the title "the Liverpool of South Africa." I doubt as to whether its commercial self-righteousness had developed to the extent of adopting the sobriquet "the Honest Port." My most salient memories are of hospitality, wool, hides, pumpkins, and sand. So far as I can recall, neither Main Street nor the Market Square was paved. That useful but ungainly ship of the southern deserts, the ox-wagon, was much in evidence. When the wind blew, as it did nearly all the time we were there, the dust arose in one continuous cloud, and grit reigned supreme.

But the hospitality of the Port Elizabethans was a thing to be remembered with great pleasure. No sooner had we landed than invitations poured in on us. This was not merely complimentary—it was the outcome of genuine kindness and a desire to be helpful. There was no ostentation, but just the natural expression of a simple desire to welcome and assist the stranger newly arrived within the gates. Hospitality was one of the cardinal South African virtues in those days. It has been truly said that even a quarter of a century ago a man might ride from Cape Town to the Limpopo without a shilling in his pocket, and be well entertained all the way. Things

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have, however, much changed in this respect. I suppose this was inevitable; true hospitality is a plant which seldom survives the hot stress of the struggle for riches.

Grahamstown was our destination, so an ox-wagon of the largest size and with a team to match was hired to convey us and our belongings to the city, which has since become so celebrated as the abode of saints. Our first outspan was in the valley of the Zwartkops River, close to a big *vlei*, which was surrounded by dense, scrubby jungle. I had a small single-barrelled rifle, so I loaded this and went off in search of big game. In anticipation of our translation to Africa I had done a good deal of rifle practice at Springfield, and had thus become a fair shot.

But now, to my great disappointment, I could find nothing on which to exercise my skill. After a long, hot, circular walk, in the course of which I had not seen a living thing, I found myself once more on the edge of the *vlei*, within a hundred yards of the wagon. I was so thirsty that I found it impossible to pass the water without drinking. The margin of the *vlei* was very muddy, so, placing my rifle against a tree, I stepped from one tussock to another, so as to get within reach of deeper and, therefore, clearer

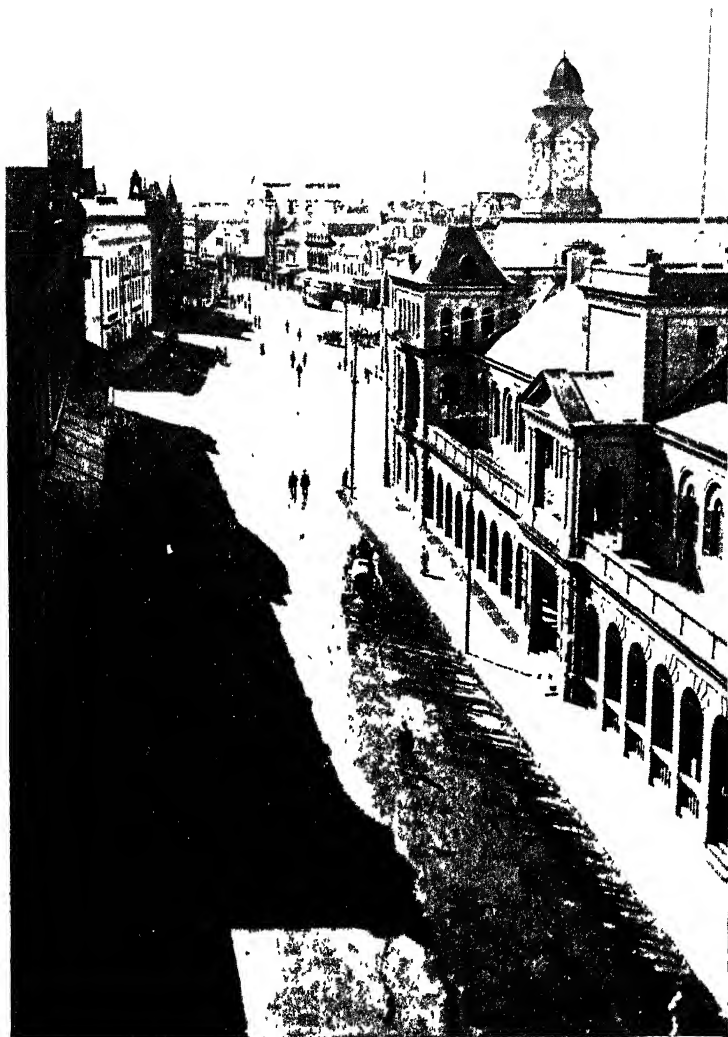


Photo by the Author }

PORT ELIZABETH IN 1912.

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water. I bent down to drink, placing one hand on a tussock and the other on what I took to be a stone, about six inches in diameter. But when I touched it the supposed stone emitted a terrible “quor-r-rr-k,” and squattered away. It was an immense bull-frog I had tried to lean upon. I sprang up and fled. Such was my first experience of African big game.

After a six days' trek we reached Grahamstown. We failed to observe any saints, but, on the other hand, met a number of very kind sinners, who did a lot towards making our stay a pleasant one. For a week we were the guests of Judge Fitzpatrick and his wife. The judge and my father had occupied chambers together as young men in Dublin. “Sir Percy” was then a boy—I should say about three or four years my junior. The judge's orchard was all that could be desired by hungry boys; the flavour of the apricots there growing will never be forgotten by me.

We took a house as a temporary measure, my father in the meantime endeavouring to secure a suitable farm. In this he was unsuccessful, so after six weeks we hired another wagon and started for King William's Town. The rains had been heavy, and the drift of the Fish

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River on the direct road was consequently impassable, so we took the longer route and crossed by the old wooden military bridge at Fort Brown. This bridge was swept away by the great flood of 1874. A great iron-girder structure has been put in its place.

Just before fording the Keiskamma River we encountered a most terrible thunderstorm. Whilst making all due allowance for inexperience, and having since sampled some heavy weather of various sorts in the tropics, I am of opinion that this storm was the worst I have ever seen. Early in the afternoon of a hot bright day, snow-white, solid-looking clouds began to collect around the peaks of the Amatole Mountains. These grew rapidly, until they coalesced in a dense, compact mass. After remaining stationary, for some time, this began to move slowly, towards us. It was black beneath, but dazzlingly white at the summit. It swept down with accelerating speed. The air throbbed with that most awe-inspiring sound, the guttural murmur of approaching hail. For some minutes the rain descended in drowning sheets. Then the hail smote us like a roaring cataract. The wind was so furious that the wagon-till was almost torn to pieces. But, as terrifying agencies, these

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were as nothing to the lightning—which appeared to stab the ground so closely, and incessantly all around us that escape seemed an impossibility—and to the thunder, which kept up a continuous bellow, punctuated by stunning crashes. The storm lasted far into the night; then the clouds rolled away, leaving an absolutely clear sky. Next morning was cloudless, and was followed by a lovely day. We searched far and near for evidence of damage, but all we found was a shattered mimosa-tree. The bark and the wood were lying about, frayed into their ultimate fibres; they looked like teased-out flax. Curiously enough they showed no sign of burning.

After a trek lasting eight days we reached King William's Town, which even then was a flourishing place. Three regiments were stationed there—the 9th and 11th Infantry and the old Imperial Cape Mounted Riflemen. Of the latter, the rank and file were principally Hottentots, but the officers were European. This regiment, an excellent one in every respect, was shortly afterwards disbanded.

We settled down for a stay in King William's Town, to enable us to take our bearings. My father made various trips throughout the district, looking for a suitable farm. Red-coated soldiers

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and red-blanketed natives were everywhere in evidence. The liquor-shops (canteens they were called) did a roaring trade. Every morning hundreds of natives, mounted on wiry ponies and clad in nothing but trousers and red blanket, would gallop into the town by every road. In the afternoon they would gallop back again, nearly all more or less tipsy. The ponies were excellent animals; in breed they were identical with the famed "Basuto pony," for which long prices are given to-day. It is a great pity, that these ponies have been allowed to become practically extinct in the Cape Colony. For hardiness and docility they were unequalled. Like so much else, they, melted away in the coffers of the canteen-keeper.

Socially, King William's Town was in a most curious condition. The military absolutely ruled the roast. Trade, whether wholesale or retail, carried the Mark of the Beast, and no one connected therewith was recognized. Neither beauty, intellect, nor wealth was allowed to count against the disgrace involved in one being in any way connected with commerce. I will give an illustration showing how strong this preposterous feeling was.

My sister was very popular with the military

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set. (We were poor enough, in all conscience, but we had not disgraced ourselves by contact with trade.) She struck up a friendship with the daughter of the proprietor of a large business. He belonged to an old and much-esteemed colonial family. The girl was pretty, accomplished, and amiable. But she was "left out" of everything. Dance after dance was given, but Miss X—— never received an invitation. My sister was distressed at this, and, when a large military dance was projected, used every ounce of her influence towards having her friend invited. But all her trouble was in vain.

What made the situation hopeless was the circumstance that the civilians accepted it with contemptible humility. It was almost pathetic to observe how people, just on the border-line, received with humble thankfulness such crumbs of recognition as were occasionally thrown to them. Snobbery increases in offensiveness when it is transplanted.

Living was exceedingly cheap. I think the price of meat was twopence per pound. I have seen hundreds of bags of excellent potatoes offered on the morning market and taken away unsold because no one would bid a shilling per bag for them. Most people were poor, but they seemed

Reminiscences of a

somehow to be comfortable enough. There was no such thing as pauperism. Even the poorest could afford to keep horses. Journeys were generally performed on horseback, luggage being carried on a pack-horse, led by an after-rider. I had a splendid pony, which cost only £3. He grazed on the town commonage; besides grass, he never got anything to eat but an occasional handful of mealies. Yet he always was in good condition. On this pony, I regularly followed the hounds for some months—for the military, kept a pack of foxhounds with which duiker antelopes were hunted—and was usually in at the death.

After a time my father managed to hire what was believed to be a suitable farm near Maclean Town. It was called "Sunny Slope," and it belonged to Mr. Benjamin Norton, who lived on the farm adjoining. Here we began farming with about eight hundred sheep and a few head of cattle. The farm contained long, gentle, undulating slopes, divided by shallow kloofs full of forest. The pasturage was rich and water was plentiful. But our farming was not successful; it was hardly possible that it could have been so. Farming is a trade, and has to be learnt. Moreover, wool went down in price and the sheep contracted various diseases. However, the latter

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evil was overcome with the kind assistance of our neighbours.

In the days I write of, the whole of the coast of British Kaffraria between the Kei River and the Keiskamma, with the exception of the then insignificant town of East London and a small area in its vicinity, was almost uninhabited. It was the custom for practically all Kaffrarian stock-farmers to trek down to the coast with their stock for the three winter months. Then the range of forest-clothed sandhills forming the coastline held a succession of camps. The scenery was enchanting; every valley brimmed with evergreen forest, and between the valleys sloped downs, clothed with rich grass.

Game was abundant, and the lagoon at the mouth of every stream piercing the line of sandhills teemed with fish. The trek-period was looked upon as one of holiday. Care was thrown to the winds; picnics, hunting, and sea-bathing were the order of the day. Social gatherings took place alternately at the various camps not too distant from each other. More or less impassable estuaries, where the larger streams broke through to the sea, divided the coast tract into so many separate blocks.

Horses were plentiful; probably every in-

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dividual, not too old or too young to ride, had at least one mount available. Young men and maidens thought nothing of riding ten miles to tea, and riding back in the starlight when the gathering broke up. Homely song and the strains of the now much-despised concertina mingled with the softened thunder of the surf, and, borne by the mild breath of the sea-wind, no doubt surprised the wild creatures whose sanctuaries we had invaded. I have since heard some of the greatest singers and instrumentalists, but no music has ever given me such joy, as those rudimentary strains listened to at night in a clearing of the forest near the mouth of the Gonubie River, with the chastened resonance of the Indian Ocean surf as an accompaniment.

I often recall our bathing. The beach was level and sandy, not a reef nor even a rock was within sight. Immense rollers—fugitives from the wrath of far-off tempests—used to sweep in continuously. Just before breaking these would tower aloft, their fine-drawn crests poised for an instant in the sunlight. Our favourite sport was among these waves. We would buffet our way out to the breaking zone. Then, as the mighty walls of glistening water swept up, we would drive through them, one by one, or else

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lie flat on the water in the hollow, side to the advancing wave. In the latter case the wave would pick the bather up with a sudden swing, poise him for an instant on its trembling crest, and then whirl him round and round as it swept resistlessly, shoreward. This whirling was so rapid that I have occasionally, almost lost consciousness when in the grip of an unusually powerful breaker. We never considered that we were doing anything venturesome; the sport described was followed by, all and sundry, quite as a matter of course. Nevertheless, I think the boys used to venture out farther than the men. Sharks we never thought of. It was not considered possible that we could be carried out to sea, for the greatest difficulty lay in keeping oneself from being flung back on the shore by the rapidly advancing waves. I wonder whether bathers nowadays venture out as far as we did.

The friends with whom I usually stayed were the Barbers, who lived at Grey Park, a few miles from Sunny Slope. I mean Mr. Hilton Barber, now of Halesowen, near Cradock, and his brothers Guy, and Graham. The latter, one of the truest friends I ever had, is, alas! long since dead. He fell a victim to pneumonia at Johannes-

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burg in the early days. Related to or connected with the Barbers were the Atherstones, Cummings, McIntoshes, and Dicks, whose tents usually stood in the vicinity of the Barber encampment.

I recall one incident which caused a great deal of laughter. Mr. Guy Barber was then engaged to his present wife, who was Miss McIntosh, a girl of remarkable beauty. A certain Mr. Larry O'Toole, who had come out in the *Asia* under my father's protection, was staying at a camp in the vicinity. One day a wild-duck shoot was in progress. Larry, who knew little or nothing about shooting, was of the party. The sportsmen took their stations around the margins of a large, sinuous vlei. The ducks, after being disturbed, flew up and down. Miss McIntosh, with her *fiancé*, was on horseback opposite Larry, on the other side of the water. Some ducks flew past and Larry fired. The birds were untouched, but the horse ridden by, Miss McIntosh was severely peppered and began to plunge violently. In the course of a severe reproof for his carelessness, Larry was asked by Guy Barber—

“Now, supposing you had blinded or otherwise badly injured Miss McIntosh, what would you have done?”

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“Oh ! begor,” replied Larry, “I suppose I’d have had to marry her.”

Poor Larry O’Toole ! We met, years afterwards, in a remote mining-camp. He ventured into the Low Country, beyond the Murchison Range at the wrong season, and contracted fever. In the delirium which supervened he blew his brains out. Larry had a brother, Edmund, who had been a sailor, and who joined Buller’s Horse in the Zulu War. He gained the Victoria Cross the day before Ulundi. Together with the late Lord William Beresford (“— Bill,” as he liked to be called, alliteratively) he saved a wounded man from the spears of the enemy. For this exploit the cross was offered to Lord William, but he refused to accept it unless a similar distinction were conferred on O’Toole.

The latter had a varied career. I once hailed a cab in Cape Town and found he was the driver. He told me he had saved £200 at cab-driving. But I judge from what I subsequently heard that the money did him no good. He, like so many others of “the legion that never was ’listed” with whom I have foregathered, has long since closed his earthly account.

One occurrence I heard of among the seaside camps merits relation. It should be mentioned

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that the extraordinary story reached me at second-hand. The incident is said to have taken place one season when I did not visit the coast.

At the end of the sixties no zoological garden contained a specimen of the South African ant-eater. I do not know whether any such institution contains one now. However, a very liberal price was offered for a live specimen. This extraordinary creature is almost strictly nocturnal in its habits, and is consequently extremely difficult to capture. One day a man with whom I was acquainted was riding through the veld a few miles from his camp. To his surprise he noticed a large ant-eater. Mindful of the reward offered, he sprang from his horse and seized the creature by one of its hind-legs.

The ant-eater has hardly any means of defence, its formidable claws being used solely for digging. But its strength and its digging powers are almost beyond belief. In sandy soil one will bury itself in a few seconds. In this instance the captor had to exert all his strength merely to keep the animal above ground. He was, in fact, only able to do this by means of continually shifting his position, a process involving constant and exhausting effort. He bethought him of the rein fastened to his pony's halter. With great diffi-

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culty, he loosened this, and tied it in a noose around the ant-bear's loins. But matters were not improved; the digging went on more vigorously, than ever.

At length he realized that it was impossible to prevent the animal from burrowing out of sight. One expedient remained. The pony had a long and bushy tail. He doubled the end of this, and securely fastened the reim to it. Then he hastened to his camp for the purpose of fetching a spade and calling people to assist him.

On returning a strange spectacle met his view. The pony was sitting on the ground, erect, after the manner of a biped. Its head was in the air, its hind-legs were extended horizontally, its fore-legs were waving impotently up and down. The ant-bear had carved its way, deep into the bowels of the earth, gradually, but relentlessly dragging the hapless pony down until its posterior parts hermetically sealed up the burrow. It was, in fact, only the smallness of the latter which prevented the animal from being completely buried. Eventually, however, the reim snapped, and the pony was thus released from a durance probably unique in equine experience. But I wish to make it quite clear that I guarantee nothing in connection with the foregoing re-

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markable tale, except that I have related it as it was told to me.

I often picture the rounded sandhills stretching from the Gonubie Mouth to the Nahoon, with the dark, olive-green boskage that clothed their curves with beauty, and the veil of orange-tinted mystery that at dawn hung like a curtain across that region where sea and sky awaited, breathless, the advent of day. I suppose the placid lagoons still mirror the drifting pageants of cloudland, while the purple kingfishers flit from rock to rock, or poise, fluttering in the air, before they plunge into the crystal water.

I imagine that at windless nightfall the rich, throbbing organ-tones of the Indian Ocean surf fill all the darkling glades. I wonder do the green, flame-winged loories to-day, call hoarsely through the aisles of greenery, and the bushbucks bark their angry challenges from the deep and tangled hollows. I wonder do the monkeys, when the forenoon waxes sultry, swing chattering from bough to bough down the hillside, seeking their daily drink in the coolest depths of the kloof, and do the great *Nymphalis* butterflies, with wings of ochre and pearl, flit among the tree-tops !

But so much I know : that a part of my youth



Colmar Höpfe

THE OLD OX-WAGON

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—which in some strange way, seems to have acquired an individuality, of its own—dwells, and will for ever dwell, among these scenes. And I shall never be so ill-advised as to seek it, for the wraith, like a mocking dryad, would flit from tree to tree, as beautiful and as elusive as the rainbow.

While living at Sunny Slope I paid my first visit to East London, the occasion being an agricultural show. I accompanied the Norton family. We travelled in an ox-wagon through the loveliest imaginable country. Our course lay mainly down the valley of the Nahoon River, in which the vegetation was then much richer than it is to-day. The little town of East London was confined to the west bank of the Buffalo River mouth. Where the town now stands, on the east bank, there was not a single house in 1868. So far as I can recollect, Tapson's Hotel was the only building between Cambridge and the sea. This building was still in existence a few years ago. The Buffalo River had to be crossed by means of a pontoon; the road to this was cut through dense jungle. Judging by the spoors crossing the road this jungle must have been full of game.

After the show a large picnic was held in

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the forest at the well-known Second Creek. The guests were conveyed to the spot by a paddle-tug, the *Buffalo*. This vessel now lies, a melancholy wreck, half-submerged, at the mouth of the Kowie River.

At the picnic I sustained a severe moral shock. A certain doctor with whom I was acquainted—an elderly and much-respected resident of King William's Town—looked upon the wine when it was red, and became violently uproarious. My ethical orientation became disturbed; all my canons got confused. I had seen this man wearing the insignia of municipal dignity; he had been mayor of his town during the previous year. Now he was acting the mountebank, to the huge amusement of a lot of yokels.

I knew that disreputable Europeans and natives occasionally became intoxicated, but here was my first experience of a respectable person committing such a lapse. The shock was so painful that my enjoyment was completely spoilt. I crept to a thicket, from which I could see without being seen, and observed the old gentleman's antics with amazed horror. He insisted on making a long speech, interspersed with snatches of song. This only came to an end when some of his friends seized the tails of his frock-coat

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and hauled him down. Then he was carried, protesting loudly, to the tug.

It soon became abundantly clear that our farming could not prove a success, so Sunny Slope was given up, and we returned to King William's Town. Here my father, with the remainder of his capital, purchased a property in the Alexandra Road, close to the present railway-station. Sheep had fallen heavily in value; our flock could not be realized without incurring a ruinous loss, so it was kept for a time on the town commonage. Eventually, it was handed over to a native chief named Toise, who lived on the other side of the Buffalo River, about five miles away.

I was put to the grammar school, where I studied for something more than half a year. This, it may be remarked, is all the regular schooling I ever had. Mr. John Samuel, who afterwards became a school inspector, was the head master. Dr. Theal, the historian (then Mr. Theal), was in charge of the second division, or, as it was called, the lower school.

It was my duty to ride out every Saturday to Toise's kraal for the purpose of counting the sheep. So far as I can remember, none were ever stolen—a fact of some significance con-

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sidering that the whole country, almost as far as the eye could reach in every direction, was densely populated by "raw" natives. But the unhappy animals suffered from scab and various other diseases.

Toise, albeit addicted to strong drink, was a gentleman in all essentials. He was a tall, dignified, and remarkably handsome man; his hospitality and courtesy could not be surpassed. A calabash of delicious *amaas* (koumis) was always ready for me on my arrival, and a feed of mealies provided for the pony. I believe that subsequently Toise became ruined, morally and physically, through the drink habit. He was only another of the countless victims of "Cape Smoke."

In the days I write of, the climate of the Eastern Province was totally different from what it is to-day. From October to March thunderstorms, accompanied by torrential rain, were of frequent occurrence. Early in the afternoon clouds would appear over the mountains to the north-west; between three and four o'clock these clouds, now forming immense, towering masses of cumulus, would sweep down towards the sea, pouring out torrents of rain on their course. Between five and six o'clock all these meteorological alarms and excursions would be over,

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the sky would be again clear, and the sun again shining hotly on the drenched earth.

Hailstorms occasionally happened. I recall a very remarkable one that passed over that portion of King William's Town known as "the German Village" in, I think, the summer of 1869. The hailstones, which were of immense size, did not fall very thickly. Moreover, the area of the town over which the storm passed contained no houses but thatched ones. Great lumps of ice, all of the same shape, but of various sizes, began to rain out of the sky. The shape was that of a full-blown rose; it suggested that each had been formed in a tiny vortex-mould. Some of the lumps measured four inches across. Dr. Egan, at the Grey Hospital, secured one monster which weighed a pound and three-quarters.

The throbbing roar heralding the approaching hail-cataract was a thing never to be forgotten. I heard of no fatalities among human beings, but a flock of sheep was wiped out at a spot where the storm concentrated. This happened on a high, abrupt hill about twenty miles away.

In those days streams such as the Kat, the Koonap, the Buffalo, and the Keiskamma were

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really, rivers ; often they foamed down in mighty brown torrents. As there were no bridges, except the occasional military ones, post-carts would often be delayed for days at a time, and one's letters would sometimes arrive more or less in a state of pulp. The whole country, was covered with rank vegetation up to June, when nearly all the grass would be burnt off. It is to the cessation of this immemorial practice—one noted by all the voyagers along the south-east coast—that I attribute the enormous increase of the tick pest.

One of my favourite diversions, when the Buffalo was in flood, was to ride to a spot near the upper end of the town and there strip. I would tie my clothes into a bundle and entrust them, with my pony, to another boy. Then I would jump into the river and allow myself to be carried down by the torrent. All one had to do was to keep well in the middle of the stream and avoid contact with occasional uprooted trees.

Once or twice I found myself, when thus swimming, unpleasantly close to puff-adders and other snakes which had been washed by the flood out of their hiding-places in the holes piercing the river-banks. But such reptiles were

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always too much stiffened by the cold water to be capable of doing any injury.

Meanwhile the boy, with my clothes and the pony, would be waiting for me at a stated spot some distance below the wool-washing yards to the south-east of the town. I should not now care to venture on such an excursion.

CHAPTER IV

Trip to the Transkei—Tiyo Soga and his family—Trip to the seaside—The Fynns—Wild dogs—Start as a sheep-farmer—My camp burnt out—First commercial adventure—Chief Sandile—Discovery of diamonds—Start for Golconda—Travelling companions—Manslaughter narrowly escaped—Old De Beers—Life at the Diamond-fields—Scarcity of water—First case of diamond-stealing—I nearly discover Kimberley Mine—The rush to Colesberg Kopje—My first diamond—Its loss and my humiliation—Kimberley claims dear at £10—Camp-life in early days—I.D.B.—Canteen burning.

It was in the June holidays of 1869 that I undertook my first real adventure. I then accompanied Mr. Samuel and two of my schoolfellows on an expedition to the Transkei, which at that time was still practically independent Kaffirland. The Fingoes were in a sense under British protection, and Mr. Fynn was resident with Sarili (usually known as "Kreli"), the celebrated Gcaleka chief.

The Kei River was the colonial boundary. Travelling on horseback we crossed the river by a drift some distance below the site of the

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present Komgha Bridge. One of my companions was Tom Irvine, now a partner in the firm of Dyer and Dyer, of East London. The other was Alfred Longden, whose father was Wesleyan missionary near the site on which the town of Butterworth now stands, Richard Irvine had a trading station at the Incu Drift. The old building still exists. When we arrived there the tobacco crop had just been harvested, and the trader was kept busy from early morning until late at night buying tobacco at the rate of a penny per pound, the price being taken in the form of trade goods.

We moved on to Tutura, the mission station of that remarkable man Tiyo Soga. Mrs. Soga and her sister, Miss Burnside, received us with the best hospitality. Their dwelling consisted of a row of huts which were connected with each other by means of wattled passages. The huts had doors and ordinary windows.

The Sogas were just on the point of starting for the seaside on their annual holiday when we joined them. Their destination was the mouth of the Kobongaba River. We decided to join the party. I rode most of the way, some forty miles, at Mr. Soga's side. He beguiled the time

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by reciting Wordsworth's poetry, which at that time I had never heard of. As each fresh aspect of the magnificent scenery unfolded itself he would pause and declaim some appropriate quotation from "The Excursion."

I have seldom been so impressed by any one as by this Kaffir, who, born in absolute barbarism, had acquired culture both deep and wide, and then returned to try and civilize his people. At the time I met him Mr. Soga was hard at work translating, for the benefit of the Natives, the Bible and "Pilgrim's Progress." The Kaffir language is eminently suited to the former ; good Kaffir linguists will tell you that many of the Psalms sound better in Mr. Soga's version than in English. His rendering of "Pilgrim's Progress," too, is a masterpiece.

Tiyo Soga was a tall man of slender build and with a stooping figure. Even at the time I tell of a short, hacking cough gave evidence of the consumption which some years later caused his death. He was not alone a deeply cultivated scholar, but a Christian gentleman in the fullest sense of the term.

We passed Kreli's kraal, but the chief was in retirement under the hands of a witch-doctor, so we did not see him. The scenery, along the

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watershed between the Kei and the Kobonqaba is wonderfully beautiful. The weather was calm and clear ; the ocean like a world of sapphire fringed with snow. The populous villages of the Natives stood on every ledge ; sleek cattle grazed in every valley. The people looked prosperous and contented. We met civility everywhere ; milk was offered us at every kraal. I visited the same locality, a few years ago and sojourned for a few weeks near the site of the old Soga camp, but the season was summer, and both ticks and snakes were in evidence to a most unpleasant degree. The natives also had changed ; no longer were they so civil or so hospitable. Revisiting the scenes of one's youth is usually an unsatisfactory experience.

We spent a week with the Sogas, and then went to the camp of the Fynns, a few miles away. Here, also, we were hospitably entertained. There were three Fynn brothers, and their aggregate height was nineteen feet. Late one afternoon, when returning from a ride, I had my first sight of wild dogs. In crossing a deep, bushy, kloof by a bridle-path I reached an open space. Here I saw five large, smoke-coloured animals. Two were squatting on their haunches, the others were standing. I passed

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within about twenty-five yards of them. They made no hostile demonstration, neither did they attempt to run away. When I related my experience at the camp, I was told that the animals I had seen were wild dogs, a pack of which had for some time been marauding in the vicinity.

I returned to King William's Town via Tsono and Tembani. We travelled mostly by night. My companion—for I had left Mr. Samuel's party—was a trader. He carried four hundred sovereigns in a holster. We off-saddled at several kraals, and on each occasion the gold jingled audibly, yet we never felt the slightest uneasiness. In those days it was a common practice for traders to send large sums of money, by native runners from the heart of Kaffirland, yet I do not think there is a single instance of such a trust having been betrayed.

When I reached King William's Town it was quite evident that our sheep were not flourishing. They were, in fact, dwindling daily. Something had to be done, so my father hired a farm about ten miles away, in the direction of Kabousie. I volunteered my services as caretaker of the flock, and to my intense gratification this offer was accepted. The farm had no homestead, so

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I was given an old bell-tent, purchased at a military rummage sale, to live in.

My assistant was a Kaffir lad named Toby, whose memory is kept green, so far as I am concerned, by his enormous lips. These resembled sausages strung across his face—literally from ear to ear. I now considered myself to be a full-fledged farmer. An old sheep-kraal was put into a state of repair. Toby and I built a wattle hut, and a shelter for the pony. The hut was so small that Toby had to lie curled up in it; if he stretched himself, either head or heels had to be out in the cold.

After the novelty had worn off, the monotony of my life became appalling. There were no neighbours with whom to foregather; there was no game to shoot; the surrounding country was uninteresting to a degree. Far away, just peeping over the rim of the horizon, were the peaks of the Amatole and Kabousie Ranges—regions of enchantment, cliff-crowned and forest-clothed—towards which my soul vainly sighed. But an accident quickly brought this chapter of my life to a tragic close. One very windy day I went out with the sheep, leaving Toby at the camp to cook the dinner. The blasts were so strong that it was impracticable to light a fire in the

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open. Toby suggested lighting one in the tent, and to this I unwisely consented, warning him, however, to be very careful lest our dwelling should catch alight.

On my way home, a couple of hours later, I could not see either the tent or the hut. The country was level and quite bare, so the tent had always been a conspicuous landmark from any spot within a mile or so. For a time I thought I must have lost my way. But no ; there was the kraal. I came to the conclusion that the tent had been blown down. When I reached the spot all I found was two circles of ashes. The tent and the hut had been burnt down—bedding, clothing, provisions—everything except the gun, which I had taken with me, and the saddle which was in the pony's shelter down in the kloof had been consumed. Toby had bolted. I burst into tears and flung myself to the ground. Night fell ; I could not endure the loneliness, so fled from the desolated spot. I was at the time not quite fourteen years old.

Shortly after this catastrophe I trekked with my flock to a small farm near what is now called Kei Road, but which was then known as Hangman's Bush. Here there was a homestead. But the place was surrounded by small

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fields cultivated by German peasants ; consequently the sheep were continually trespassing and being sent to the pound. Before many months the flock had to be disposed of at a ruinous loss. Thus ingloriously ended my first and last adventure as a stock-farmer.

My next essay towards wooing fortune was in the line of Kaffir trading. I hired myself to a trader, whose shop was in the Gaika Reserve, close to the kraal of the celebrated Chief Sandile, not far from Tembani. Sandile, who possessed enormous influence with his powerful and war-like tribe, was a man utterly wanting in dignity. He was club-footed, and consequently went very lame. I remember being once sent on a message to his kraal. He came to know that I had a threepenny-piece, so began begging for this. He paid no heed to my refusal, but clung to my stirrup-leather and dragged himself after me for nearly half a mile, begging in the most abject terms. I am glad to be able to say, that I kept the coin. But Sandile was a brave man ; he died the death of a soldier in the Gaika Rebellion of 1878. He was killed in a skirmish in the Pirie Forest, near King William's Town.

My career as a trader was shorter and even more inglorious than that as a farmer. Within

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a month I was discharged as utterly incompetent. Although I resented this at the time, I am now convinced that the dismissal was well-merited.

It is difficult in these days—when Cook & Son issue excursion tickets to the Zambesi, and beyond—to realize the mystery and glamour that hung over the greater part of South Africa forty years ago. I can remember how as a child I used to pore over the maps of the period—so poor in detail, occasionally with “elephants for want of towns”—and wonder as to whether, after I had grown up, I might hope one day to reach the Orange River. Farther than that my wildest anticipatory dreams did not take me.

But at length the dazzling sheen of the diamonds unearthed on the banks of the distant Vaal, thrilled every one with a desire for adventure. Before we could realize the process, the caravan-crowded road was open to Pncil; thus one of the ramparts of mystery, had fallen.

We have all become more or less accustomed to diamonds nowadays, but forty years ago a diamond stood rather for crystallized romance than for a form of carbon worth so much per carat. It stood for the making of history, for empire, and for unbounded wealth. We knew that wars had been waged for the possession of

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such gems, that blackest crime nor oceans of blood could dim their piercing lustre. We felt that every celebrated stone, whether shining on the breast of a lovely woman or blazing in the sceptre of a king, was a symbol of power, a nucleus of tragedy, a focus of human passion.

It is, therefore, no wonder that the disturbance of our uneventful South African life—a life as simple and as serene as any lived on the face of the earth—caused by the realization that diamonds had actually been discovered near the borders of the Cape Colony, raised a flood of wildest excitement. This flood soon swept in a wave of men over the wide, sun-scorched plains of the glamorous North.

Many of my friends had ventured to the new Golconda, and I was fired with desire to follow the gleam. At length I met a man who, after much persuasion, consented to let me accompany him on a contemplated trip to the Vaal River. This was William Brown, who will be remembered by most old Kaffrarians. Brown was a farmer of sorts, usually squatting on Government land, and occasionally occupying a hut on the fringe of the Isidengi Forest, not far from Kabousie Nek. I had now and then stayed with him there, and had spent many days wandering

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with my gun through the lovely woodland that surrounded his dwelling.

Living in another hut in the vicinity was a very strange character called "Jarge"; his surname has completely escaped me. Jarge was a very old man. Hailing originally from Somersetshire, he had never lost the dialect of his early years. Many an hour have I spent at his saw-pit, listening to recitals of his fifty-year-old adventures, some of which were most unedifying. I remember being much amused at an expression he used. He had met with a large leopard; the animal behaved in a threatening manner. On being questioned as to his feelings on the occasion, Jarge replied: "O, zur, I beed awful frowt."

Brown's preparations for departure were slow; my patience was severely tried. But at length everything was ready. The caravan consisted of two Scotch carts, each drawn by six oxen. With these we started on our long journey, crossing Kabousie Nek by a road of a gradient steeper than that of any other I have traversed in a vehicle. We were accompanied by another strange character—a man named Dixon, who had lived for many years at the foot of the Kabousie Mountain. Dixon had been a military tailor at

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Gibraltar. He had a red face and fiercely protuberant eyebrows, a curled-up moustache, and an imperial. When he became intoxicated, as he occasionally did, Dixon grew more solemn than any of the various judges it has been my privilege to meet. Twenty years afterwards I saw him at the front in one of the Kaffir wars. He must then have been nearly seventy years of age, yet, literally, he did not look a day older than when we first met.

We struck a bad snowstorm on the top of the Stormberg; had we not been able to drive the oxen into a sheltered kloof they would assuredly have perished. We shivered sleepless all night under one of the carts in a freezing gale. Next morning was cloudless; the ranges far and near were heavily covered with glistening snow. A few days later we picked up two men, who were tramping towards the diamond-fields. One was named Beranger; I believe he was the son of a former lessee of Covent Garden Opera House. His companion was a man named Hull, an ex-publican from Lambeth. With these two chance companions we entered into a sort of partnership; for some months after reaching the diggings we all worked together.

On our way through the Orange Free State we

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saw immense herds of springbuck and an occasional herd of blesbuck and wildebeeste. As we were badly armed, very little game fell to our guns. In those days it was lawful for travellers to shoot game anywhere along the roadside for their own consumption ; a farmer would no more think of objecting to a stranger shooting a buck on his veld than a gardener would object to one destroying a caterpillar.

When we reached the fields we found the "dry diggings" at Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein in full swing. "Old De Beers" had only been "rushed" a few days previously. So we decided to try our luck at Bultfontein instead of going on to the Vaal River, as we had originally intended. We outspanned in the middle of the Du Toit's Pan "pan" ; this, of course, was a purely temporary camp. I was, much to my disgust, left in charge of the carts while the others went on to look for a permanent location.

Here it was that I nearly killed one of my friends. We had foregathered on the road with three brothers named Dell ; they belonged to the well-known family of that name in Lower Albany, and were proceeding to the fields in a small wagon. We had met them about a fortnight previously, and ever since the two caravans

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had travelled together. We had become very intimate ; the younger brother, Sam, was my particular friend. He taught me to smoke, and that was the cause of the trouble.

Finding "Boer" tobacco too strong for my unaccustomed nerves, I had beguiled the weary hours of my vigil by soaking about a quarter of a pound of strong tobacco in boiling water in a large pannikin. After the soaking had gone on for some considerable time, I took the tobacco out of the water, squeezed it, and set it out in the sun on a board to dry. The liquor remaining in the pannikin was just the colour of milkless coffee made with vlel water. William Dell, the eldest brother (he afterwards lived at Shilbottel, in the Peddie district), had gone to the camp with the others. He returned alone. The afternoon was hot, and Dell was extremely thirsty. When he got near his wagon he called out for water. Unfortunately there was no one at the wagon. Seeing an opportunity of paying off a score, I called out : " Here is some coffee," and offered the pannikin containing the tobacco-juice.

Poor Dell thanked me with effusion, seized the vessel eagerly, and took a big gulp of its contents. At once he flung the vessel into the air, fell to

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the ground, and began to contort violently. I looked on, horror-stricken at the effect of my practical joke. After a few frightful seconds vomiting set in; this, no doubt, saved the sufferer's life. I had—quite unwittingly, of course—administered a most virulent poison. In the midst of his convulsions I caught William Dell's eye, and read something suggestive of murder in it. So I made for the open veld, and stood not upon the order of my going. Late at night I returned to the vicinity of the camp and, after some difficulty, opened communication with Sam. He acted as ambassador to William, and the latter was good enough to forgive me. Thus I escaped the thrashing I so richly deserved.

Our plans were changed almost immediately; we decided to try our luck at Old De Beers. Next day we trekked thither, and pitched our camp on the plain to the south-westward of the mine. This plain was studded with very large "camel-thorn" trees. Before the axe had wrought universal havoc, the landscape surrounding the dry diggings was well-wooded and highly picturesque. At the spot we selected for our encampment two especially large trees stood; between these we pitched our tents.

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I felt quite at home. Camped in the vicinity were many old Kaffrarian friends — Barbers, McIntoshes, Cummings, and others. We started work immediately on the eastern side of the mine. Claims were to be had for the mere trouble of marking out and the payment of a licence; probably not more than two-thirds of the surface of the mine had been “located.” We found a very few diamonds; all were small, and none were of any particular value.

Fuel was plentiful; at night camp-fires twinkled far and near. Around these happened some of the pleasantest gatherings I have ever attended. The nights were usually clear and calm—however the wind may have swirled the gritty dust during the day,—and the stars shone as they only shine when the dew-moist air of upland South Africa underlies them. Every one capable of making music, whether by means of violin, concertina, or voice, was much in demand. Coffee and rusks circulated freely. Quite a number of diggers had brought their families from the Colony; thus, many a pretty girl in print dress and “cappie” joined the firelit circle. Most of us were young and free from care. Life was full of romance, for Fortune scattered her favours with an occasionally lavish hand. Every

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few days one would hear of some lucky digger finding a "stone" worth perhaps several hundred pounds. And in those days money was money in South Africa; that is to say, its purchasing power was probably three times as great as it is now.

Our most serious difficulty was in the matter of the water-supply. No wells had as yet been dug, and no drinking water was obtainable nearer than Wessel's Farm, seven miles away. It was part of my duty to repair thither once a week with a Scotch cart and fetch two hogsheadsful. So far as I can remember, this quantity cost six shillings at the well. Sometimes people were in great straits for something to drink. However, all were helpful towards one another. I have often known some stranger or another come to the camp with a small tin pannikin and beg for permission to fill it at one of our casks. Such a request would never be refused. After the first well in the vicinity of the mine had been sunk, water was sold from it at the rate of a shilling per bucket, and at morning and evening the crush was so great that people had to wait perhaps half an hour before they could be served. I recall one occasion when, the need for a sudden superficial ablution having arisen,

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I ran over to the liquor-shop tent and bought a bottle of soda-water for the purpose.

I have a very clear recollection of the first case of diamond-stealing on the part of a servant that came under my notice. A certain Major Bede, an American, who worked at the north end of the mine, caught a Hottentot in his employ in the act of secreting a stone. The major recovered his property, but the thief wrenched himself from the grasp of his captor, bolted like a rabbit between the sorting-heaps, and gained the open veld. A general view-hallo was raised ; I should say at least a hundred and fifty men streamed out and joined in the pursuit.

The Hottentot easily distanced them all, but unfortunately for him a man mounted on a small pony appeared on his right front. This man, seeing that a chase was in progress, headed the fugitive off. The latter was brought back, tried on the spot, and sentenced to receive fifty lashes. He was triced up to the wheel of a wagon ; an elderly man—he had been in the Royal Navy—appeared with a cat-o'-nine-tails. At every stroke the culprit called out, in derision, "Hoo-lay." Although terribly punished he never uttered a cry. I remember being struck by the curious circumstance that the ex-seaman should

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have taken the trouble to bring his "cat" with him to a mining camp. He must have had an affection for the horrible thing.

I will now relate how I very nearly became the discoverer of the world-famed Kimberley Mine. Being somewhat slightly built, I was not of much use at heavy work in the claim, so it was arranged that our Hottentot boy, David, should take my place, I taking his in the matter of herding the twelve oxen. This arrangement suited me exactly. Small game abounded, and I had the use of a gun. My favourite pasturage area was the big shallow basin to the westward, within the perimeter of which was a low, oblong rise covered with long grass, and at the eastern end of which stood a grove of exceptionally large camel-thorn trees. This rise afterwards came to be known as "Colesberg Kopje"; eventually it was named "Kimberley," after Lord Kimberley, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time of the annexation of the diamond-fields. On it were usually to be found hares, Namaqua partridges, korhaan, and an occasional steenbok. Ant-bears and jackals had been at work at various places. One burrow was exceptionally deep, and the gravel thrown up from it looked exactly like that of the claim

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in which I had been working. I determined to do some prospecting on my own account at this spot.

Unfortunately, however, I mentioned my intention at the camp. One of my peculiarities as a youngster was a morbid sensitiveness in respect of anything like chaff. This was so marked that the least attempt at teasing was enough to send me away in a state of misery. My mates knew this, and accordingly often made me the butt of their cheap witticisms. When I spoke of the burrow and the resemblance of the gravel at its mouth to the diamondiferous soil in which we were working, this was made a pretext for derision.

Day by day I was bantered about my supposed diamond-mine ; mockingly I would be asked how many carats my last find weighed, and so on. Consequently, I was afraid again to mention the subject. Had it been possible secretly to obtain the necessary appliances for prospecting, and to get them away without the knowledge of my mates, I would have done so. I often thought of asking some of my friends in the other camps to lend me tools, but the dread of my enterprise becoming known and being made the subject of more chaff deterred me, so I kept putting the thing off.

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However, I never abandoned the intention of one day carrying out the "prospect." But I delayed too long; the clue dangled by Fortune within my reach was grasped by other hands.

One day when I drove my oxen to their usual pasturage I noticed that the camel-thorn grove had been invaded. A tent had been pitched there, and the smoke of a fire arose from the camp. This annoyed me exceedingly; not because it in any way interfered with my intention of prospecting—I could still have done that freely, and the tent was nowhere near my burrow—but for the, to me, more important reason that the advent of a camp right in the middle of my preserve was bound to spoil my shooting. The camp turned out to be that of Mr. Ortlepp, of Colesberg, and his party. Mr. Ortlepp I afterwards got to know, but at that time we had not met. So for the future I avoided the area in which I had been accustomed to spend most of my days, and sought new and more lonely pastures.

But game had now become so scarce that I usually left my gun at home. Early one afternoon, when I was herding my cattle on that ridge which runs south-east from Kimberley in the direction of Du Toit's Pan, I noticed a stream

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of men flowing from De Beers towards the north-west, and at once correctly inferred what had happened. Diamonds had been discovered by the Oortlepp party, and a "rush" was in progress. Leaving the cattle to fend for themselves, I started at a run across the veld towards the objective of the rushers. My burrow!—on that my thoughts were centred; I longed to reach the spot before any one else had pegged it out. Three or four times I paused to take breath, and each time I managed to pause in the vicinity of some patch of scrub, so that I could therefrom cut pegs wherewith to mark out my "claim." When I reached the kopje—which, by the way, never was a kopje at all—men were swarming over it like ants over a heap of sugar. But I noticed with delight that my burrow and the area immediately surrounding it were still unappropriated. Accordingly I got in my pegs, enclosing a square with sides measuring approximately thirty-one feet six inches (or thirty Dutch feet), the burrow being exactly in the middle. Then I fell to the ground, panting from exhaustion.

I remained on my claim until darkness fell. One by one I watched the prospectors depart; I was not going to risk being dispossessed of my

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burrow, so stuck to my post as long as a human being was in sight. I had managed to get a message through to Brown, some time before sunset, asking him to send David out to look for the oxen. When I reached the camp I was roundly pitched into for my foolishness in abandoning the cattle and running after "wild cat." However, my blood was now up, so I told Brown that for the present I would do no more cattle-herding, as I meant to return next morning to my claim. Brown forbade my doing this, and ordered me to resume charge of the cattle, but I defied him.

The stars were still shining; there was, in fact, no hint of dawn in the sky when I reached my claim next morning. I was first in the field, having reached my destination some time even before the fire was lit in the Ortlepp camp. I brought with me a pick, a small circular sieve, a piece of plank about eighteen inches square for use as a sorting-table, and a small iron "scraper"—an instrument used in the sorting of sifted gravel. Day soon began to break, so I filled my sieve and separated the sand from the gravel, placing the latter in a heap on the plank.

There was not enough light for sorting; I sat on a tussock and watched the east grow white.

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But the morning was chill, so I sprang up and went to work with the pick, uprooting the grass and bushes. Day waxed and a few men appeared. When I thought the light strong enough, I crouched down and began sorting the gravel on the board. With the scraper I separated a small handful from the heap, and spread it out so that every individual pebble became visible. These would be swept off the board and the former process repeated. But before I got half-way through the heap my heart leaped to my throat, and I almost swooned with ecstasy—there in the middle of the spread-out gravel glittered a diamond. It was very small, not much more than half a carat in weight, still, it was most indubitably a diamond.

I searched in the pockets of my somewhat ragged coat for a scrap of paper wherein to wrap my treasure. Then I put the diminutive parcel away—very carefully, as I thought. I finished sorting the heap of gravel and again filled the sieve. I sorted this and loosened more ground. I worked hard and feverishly, loosening the ground with the pick, filling the sieve with my bare hands, sifting out the sand, and sorting what remained. However, no more diamonds could I find. I had brought in my pocket a

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lump of *roster-koek* (a lump of unleavened dough, flattened out and roasted on a gridiron). This I munched as I worked. More and more people arrived. Soon the thudding of picks and the "whish, whish" of sieves sounded from every direction.

Some one shouted. I looked up and saw numbers of people running towards a certain spot. I leapt up and ran too. A diamond had been found, and around the lucky finder an excited and curious crowd soon collected. The stone, a clear yellow octahedron of about ten carats' weight, was passed from hand to hand to be admired and appraised. After an enthusiastic "hip-hip-hurrah" the crowd dispersed, each one eager to test his claim.

I hugged my secret; no one should know of my good fortune until after my partners had arrived and I had confounded their scepticism. I rehearsed the prospective scene in imagination; what a lofty lecture I meant to read them on the unreasonableness of their incredulity. Within a few minutes another shout rang out; another crowd collected. Once more a diamond had been found. This sort of thing went on, at more or less short intervals, all day long.

It must have been nearly eleven o'clock before

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Brown and Beranger strolled up. I watched their approach.

"Well, have you made our fortune?" asked Brown.

"I have found a diamond," I replied loftily.

"What!" he said, with a start. "Where is it?"

I searched through all the pockets and interstices of my coat with trembling fingers. I turned every pocket inside out, but no diamond could I find. I vainly searched the surrounding surface of the sand. But all in vain; my treasure had disappeared. Brown and Beranger smiled superciliously, and strolled back to De Beers. That was to me an hour of bitter humiliation.

However, as the day went on, more and more diamonds, some of considerable size, were found. Indubitable evidence of this having reached my partners, they came back post-haste in the hope of being able to mark out claims. They even went so far as to peg one out. This was on the western edge of the kopje, clean outside the diamond-bearing area. But this circumstance was not yet known, for here the red soil lay nearly ten feet deep over the bed-rock. However, we exchanged this worthless site for a piece of ground in No. 9 Road—a half-claim belonging

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to Alick McIntosh. The latter piece of ground turned out to be very valuable.

Whilst affecting still to disbelieve in my find, my partners now treated me with more respect. Towards them I assumed a patronizing attitude. They no longer tried to force me to do cattle-herding. Day by day the finds grew richer and more important. So far as I remember, it was on the third day that Government sent officials to verify boundaries and make a general survey of the surface of the mine. Each individual had been, I think, permitted to mark out two claims. But the "rush" had been so swift that very few had been able to avail themselves of this privilege.

A certain amount of "hustling" was attempted; "roughs," who had come in late, occasionally tried to bully those who looked "soft" out of their ground. Being quite a youngster, I was, naturally, the kind of game these gentry were seeking. However, I sought and obtained help among my Kaffrarian friends, so when two glib-tongued scoundrels endeavoured to claim my burrow on the score of prior occupation, they were soon hunted off. Messrs. Tom Barry and George Ward were entrusted by the Landdrost with the survey. Ward, who had been in the

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Austrian Army, was an exceedingly handsome man. He was killed in the Kaffir War of 1879, not far from the Taba 'Ndoda.

I think it was on the third day after the rush that Brown, who was the only moneyed man among us, first expressed his full belief in the mine. We were seated under a camel-thorn close to the edge of the kopje, and were just about to begin our midday meal. Brown, who had been unusually silent, put down his *roster-koek* and pannikin of coffee. Then he stood up, saying—

“Yes ; there are diamonds here, right enough. I'll go and buy another claim.”

In about half an hour he returned, looking very hot and ill-tempered as he threw himself down on the sand.

“I'm d——d if they're not asking ten pounds apiece for claims,” said he ; “did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous?”

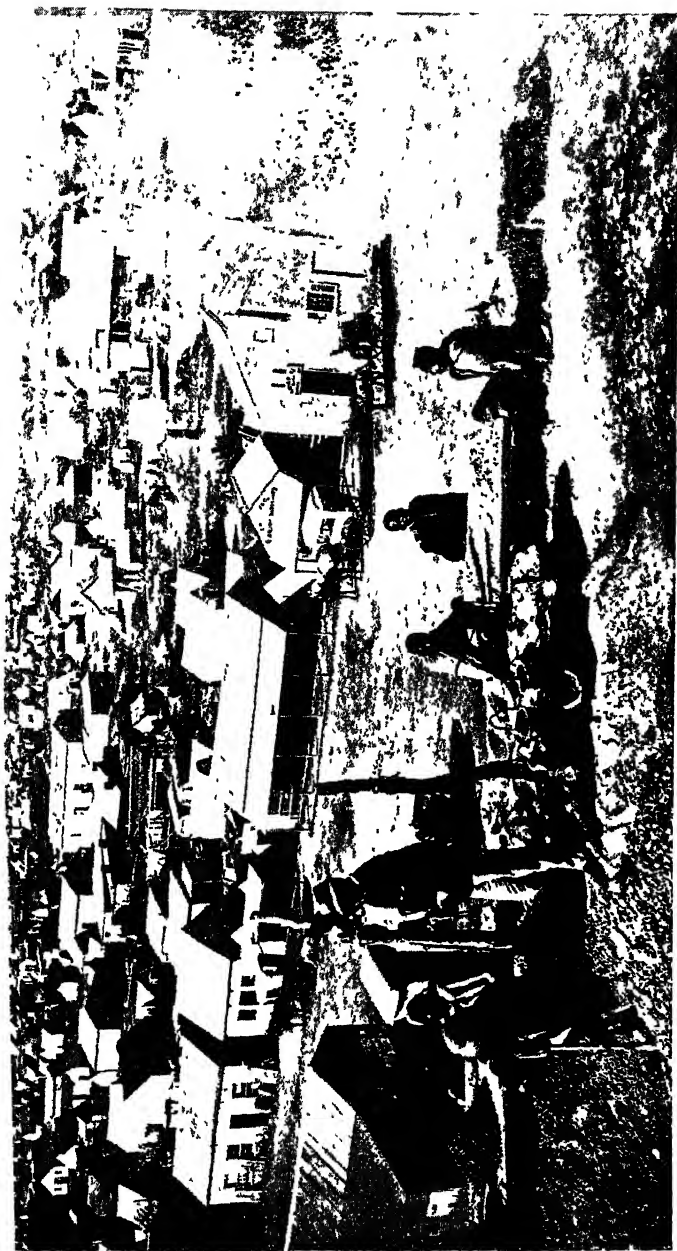
Within a few weeks it was amply proved that the new mine was one of enormous richness. Day by day large and valuable stones were unearthed. On some sorting-tables the finds ran up to as many as five and twenty diamonds per day. People flocked in by thousands from the surrounding camps. At Du Toit's Pan, Bult-

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fontein, and De Beers claims were abandoned wholesale.

As though by magic the vast plains surrounding "New Rush," as it now came to be called, became populous. A great city of tents and wagons sprang up like mushrooms in a night. There was at first no attempt at orderly arrangement; each pitched his camp wherever he listed. How, eventually, streets and a market square came to be laid out is more than I can explain. I would not like to guess at the number of people and tents surrounding the mine three months after the latter was rushed, but the tents alone must have figured to many thousands. Money literally abounded. I have more than once seen fools lighting their pipes with bank-notes, thus giving the banks concerned a present of the face value. One of the men I saw indulging in this pastime I came across a few years later in a remote gold-mining camp. He was then almost starving.

Sanitary arrangements did not exist. Although disagreeable in the extreme, this did not matter so very much as long as the weather was cool and dry, but later, under the summer sun and the then frequent thunder-showers, fever began to take its toll. The epidemic was called "diamond-field fever," and was supposed to be



KIMBERLEY IN 1873 (LOOKING SOUTH)

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a malady peculiar to the neighbourhood. But I am convinced that it was neither more nor less than ordinary enteric—the inevitable concomitant of the neglect, on the part of a crowded community, of ordinary sanitary precautions.

The character of the population soon changed. At first the ordinary colonist predominated—the kind of man who had hitherto led the simple life, in most cases that of a farmer. He was very often accompanied by his whole family. At that time many a farm, especially in the Eastern Province, must have been tenantless, or else left in charge of native servants. But as the fame of the rich and ever richer finds went abroad, a cosmopolitan crowd of wasters and adventurers poured in from the ends of the earth. However, there never was in those early days anything like the lawlessness that afterwards—as much under British as under Republican rule—prevailed on the Rand. The great stay of law and order was the individual digger, and this element of stability has always been missing at the goldfields, except in the few instances where alluvial mining has been pursued.

The first serious result of the changed conditions was the development of illicit diamond-buying, “I.D.B.” as it came to be called. This

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was due to white men of the undesirable class tempting native servants to steal from their masters' claims. The clearing-houses for this kind of trade were found to be the low canteens. When the evil had reached a certain pitch and there was no adequate law to deal with it, the better class of diggers took the matter in hand, according to the methods of Judge Lynch, and burnt down the more notorious establishments. This was done calmly, judicially, and without any unnecessary violence.

CHAPTER V

My claim a disappointment—Good results attained elsewhere—A surprised Boer—"Kopje Wallopers"—Thunderstorms—A shocking spectacle—"Old Moore" and his love-affair—The morning market—Attack of enteric—I go to King William's Town to recruit—Toby once more—A venture in onions—Return to Kimberley—The "West End" mess—The Rhodes brothers—Norman Garstin—H. C. Seppings Wright—"Schipka" Campbell—Oecil John Rhodes—A game of euchre—The church bell—Raw natives—Alum diamonds—Herbert Rhodes and the cannon—His terrible end.

My "burrow" claim, which was situated near the north end of No. 7 Road, did not turn out to be the fountain of riches I had anticipated. As a matter of fact we never found another diamond in it. Under its thin crust of limestone was an inconsiderable layer of very poor diamondiferous gravel. Beneath this lay a mass of blue shale, of the variety known as "floating reef." The latter filled the claim, as well as several of those adjoining it, to a depth, as it turned out, of between forty and fifty feet. Below

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the shale the ground proved to be rich enough. But within a few weeks of the rush we sold this piece of ground for £40.

However, our half-claim in No. 9 Road paid very well indeed. For several months our finds there averaged from three to five diamonds per diem. None of the stones were large; the heaviest weighed only about fourteen carats, and the general quality was exceptionally poor. Nevertheless, we sold the proceeds of about four months' work for nearly £600. Of this I received one-quarter.

It is curious now to reflect that we, in common with many others, were convinced that it would never pay to work to a greater depth than about ten feet. At first every claim-holder sank a "paddock," its dimensions being about eight by twelve feet. The ground lifted out was then sifted on the yet unbroken portion of the claim. The largest clods were extracted by means of a sieve with a very wide mesh, and then pulverized in a very perfunctory manner with clubs and pick-heads. The result was cleared of sand in a sieve with a fine mesh, the contents of which were poured on to a table, usually measuring about five feet by four, and sorted. It was in the course of this sorting that most of the

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diamonds weighing from ten carats downward were found. Larger stones were generally observed either when the ground was loosened in the claim or else in the large sieve. But there can be no doubt that millions of pounds' worth of diamonds were thrown away, owing to the clods not being properly pulverized.

I remember the case of a very old Boer, who was practically a pauper, finding a 90-carat stone when scratching on the side of a rubbish-heap. The finder's agitation was so great that he picked up his treasure and bolted incontinently. A few people who saw what had happened gave chase, and within a few minutes his following had increased to several hundreds. The old man sped down the street, rushed into Crowder's store, sprang over the counter, and took refuge among some sugar-bags which lay beneath. For a long time he could not be persuaded that the crowd was actuated only by curiosity, and had no furtive intent.

As may be imagined, the detritus in the claims soon became a serious embarrassment. Many claims were heaped up to such an extent that further work, pending the getting rid of the rubbish, became impossible. For those whose holdings lay close to the edge of the mine the

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problem was simple enough: all they had to do was to keep one or two natives, with barrows, removing the sand and gravel as soon as these had been sifted and sorted. But for those such as ourselves, whose claims lay more or less in the centre of the mine, the problem was a very different one. It sounds hardly credible, but after consultation we came to the conclusion that it would never pay to clear the ground by removing the rubbish, so we solved the problem by filling in the "paddock" we had sunk with the ground excavated therefrom, and opening another alongside. We unanimously decided that the portion of the claim we had sunk to a depth of about eleven feet was done with as a paying proposition. However, it was not very long before we were ridiculing our miscalculations in this respect.

According to the mining regulations, a portion of every claim had to be left standing. These portions, respectively, lay to the right-hand side of one claim and the left of another. Together they formed roadways running right across the mine. There were, I think, fourteen such roadways. They ran parallel with each other, and provided, for a time, access to every claim from the edge of the mine.

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There were so far no laws regulating the diamond trade, so a swarm of itinerant diamond-buyers were let loose on the community. Many of these were young men, who were averse to manual labour, but whose business instincts were acute. "Kopje Wallopers" was the generic term by which such dealers were known. The equipment of a kopje walloper consisted of a cheque-book, a wallet—known as "a poverty bag"—a set of scales, a magnifying-glass, and a persuasive tongue. In the course of a morning one's sorting-table might be visited by a dozen of them. Naturally enough they tried to make the best bargain circumstances permitted, but on the whole their dealings appeared to be fair enough.

During the summer months the vicinity was occasionally visited by violent thunderstorms, with deluging rain. Such were always welcomed, for they laid the almost intolerable dust. Considering the severity of these storms there were but few accidents from lightning. However, I recall one occasion when three fatalities resulted from three successive flashes. One almost unbearably hot afternoon in 1872 a small, globular, solid-looking cloud passed slowly over the mine. Otherwise, the sky was almost clear. There was not a drop of rain.

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Within the space of about eight minutes the three strokes fell. The first killed a mule just at the edge of the mine ; the second struck two men, Europeans, who were engaged in stretching a wire rope at the western end of the mine ; the third killed a Native who was sifting gravel about fifty yards from where I was standing. The stroke pierced his neck from back to front at the base of the skull ; then it ran across the sieve which he was holding in his hands and over which he was bending. It melted every third wire in its course, and made a small hole, such as might have been made with a red-hot bradawl, through the wood. The unfortunate victim afforded a shocking spectacle, for his tongue swelled enormously and protruded from his mouth for about nine inches.

I well remember the first wedding which took place at "New Rush." It must have been in the summer of 1871. Close to my dwelling an enormous circus-tent had been pitched, and this was hired for the occasion. A dance was held in the evening, but it ended in disaster, for a heavy thunderstorm broke, with violent wind, and the tent collapsed on the guests. Had a torrential rain not been falling a horrible catastrophe might have occurred, for the reason that the festive

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scene was lit with paraffin-lamps. However, the canvas was so completely soaked that it could not ignite. But the dancers were held, prone on the ground, by the weight of the sodden material for quite a long time, and the ladies afforded a sorry spectacle as they were hauled out, one by one, by their rescuers. The name of the bridegroom was Cooper. I was destined to meet him at Pretoria a few years afterwards under very extraordinary circumstances. The episode will be related in due course.

A well-known man at Du Toit's Pan in the early days was "Old Moore." I forget what his profession was. Moore was quite sixty years of age, and was exceedingly corpulent; nevertheless, he was amorous to a degree. There was a remarkably pretty barmaid at Benning and Martin's bar, and with her Moore fell in love. This circumstance was a source of great amusement to the local gilded youth. A plot was concocted, the lady consenting to take part in it.

A certain D—— approached Moore and persuaded him that it was only fear of her employers on the part of the damsel that prevented her receiving his addresses more kindly, but that if an elopement could be arranged she would be

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willing to accompany him. At the same time the manner of the fair one altered; she met her admirer's gaze with a disingenuously languishing eye, she pressed his hand at meeting and at parting, she replied to his frequent letters in fervent if ungrammatical terms. Old Moore was in the seventh heaven of delighted anticipation.

D—— acted the part of mutual friend. The details of the elopement were duly arranged; it was to take place on the following Saturday night, after the bar had closed. The lady's absence would thus not be noticed, the bar being closed on Sunday. By Monday the lovers would be over the Boshof Hills and far away across the wide plains of the Orange Free State. Old Moore acquiesced ecstatically, and engaged, at a very heavy cost, a cart with a spanking team of horses.

At the specified time, 12.30 a.m. on Sunday, the equipage stood ready at the appointed spot. Soon a cloaked figure, heavily veiled, was seen to approach with faltering steps, leaning on the arm of the mutual friend. The latter whispered to the impatient lover that the lady felt her position keenly, and begged that she might be left to herself for a time until her feelings became composed. Shrinkingly and in silence

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she climbed into the cart. Moore followed, and a start was made along the Boshof road.

The first stopping-place was at a wayside hotel a few miles out. Here Moore alighted for the purpose of obtaining some refreshment. On returning to the cart he was astonished to find that his companion had so far recovered from her nervousness as to be able to alight as well. She was standing in the road. A full moon, appropriate to the occasion in more senses than one, was shining. Feeling that the time had arrived when he might assume the privileges of a lover, Moore approached and attempted to slip an arm around his charmer's waist. To his astonishment, however, she lifted up her skirts and began to dance a "can-can" in the road. It then became apparent that her legs were clothed in trousers. The lady was at home in bed; she had been personated by a graceless young cub whose stature was about the same as hers.

The morning market at "New Rush" used to be crowded by wagons loaded with game. Most of this was shot on the flats beyond the Boshof Hills—that range which is visible, about ten miles to the north-eastward, from Kimberley. I have seen hundreds of springbucks sold for a shilling apiece; blesbucks and wildebeeste for

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half a crown. The tails of the latter were in great demand for use as "chowries" wherewith to keep off the flies. I have seen a pound of fresh butter sold for seventeen and sixpence, a dish of peas for thirty shillings, and a head of cabbage for thirty-five. The latter prices were, of course, quite exceptional.

Shortly after the summer of 1871 set in, I, in common with many others, went down with enteric fever. Doctors were plentiful enough, but there was no hospital, and nurses were unknown. However, with the help of a sound constitution I managed to keep alive on a diet of black coffee and *roster-koek* administered by our Hottentot, David. My most painful recollections of that horrible time are connected with the plague of flies. These gave one no rest, night or day, for at night the slightest movement of the canvas set them buzzing. Better men than I died in every direction. I got the notion that I, too, would inevitably die unless I could manage to get away, so by an effort of will I crawled out of bed and took a passage in the coach for Queenstown.

I collapsed a few hours after starting, but the other passengers were very kind. The coach was so arranged that they sat facing each other

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in a double row, so they made a couch for me with rugs laid on their knees, and on this I rested. I reached Queenstown more dead than alive, but a few days of rest there picked me up, and I managed to survive the post-cart journey to King William's Town.

A few weeks at home, followed by a trip to the seaside near the Tshalumna Mouth, completed my recovery. No sooner was I well than an overpowering desire to return to the diamond-fields took possession of me. A military rummage-sale was held at King William's Town, and at this I noticed a "condemned" commissariat wagon, which seemed (barring that it wanted a coat of paint) to have nothing whatever the matter with it. It was knocked down to me for £5, and I spent £8 on having it repaired and painted, and in providing the necessary tackle. This wagon was the best wagon of its kind I have ever owned—or travelled in. What caused it to be classed as "condemned" was a problem none but a military man could hope to solve. I also purchased eight strong oxen.

One day when strolling along one of the King William's Town streets I gained a sense that something large and familiar was approaching. Memory began to stir ; yes—it was Toby's mouth

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expanded into Toby's wholesale smile, and with Toby's long-lost self behind it. He had grown into a man in the interval since the conflagration and his flight. At that time the plays of Shakespeare were the only serious literature I had read. Unbidden, the song of the Page to Mariana—which in some freakish fashion I had always connected with Toby's physiognomy,—tripped from my tongue—

“Take, O, take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn.”

Toby was fortunately disengaged, so we struck a bargain on the spot. He agreed to accompany me back to the diamond-fields as driver or leader of my team, as occasion might demand. I next sought around for something to take with me in the way of trade—something that would ensure profit. I eventually decided upon onions. Colossal varieties of this wholesome but malodorous vegetable were grown by the German farmers in the vicinity, and were to be purchased at a reasonable rate. I obtained twenty muid sackfuls, piled them on my wagon, and started. My cargo smelt to heaven—but what of that? I could always, except in the rare event of rain, sleep well to windward. Nevertheless my nose



(Photo box)

(Care Bluhm King William's Town)

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suffered great distress during the course of that journey. But the circumstance that I realized 400 per cent. profit on my venture consoled me.

I had also acquired a sporting Snider carbine and four hundred cartridges. This weapon was the worst but one of all the many kickers I discharged during the years in which most of my spare time was devoted to killing game. The exception was an elephant gun which I used some years afterwards, and which made my nose bleed every time I discharged it. After firing ten shots from my vicious little Snider my shoulder would turn black and blue. But it could drive a bullet straight, as many springbucks on the plains of the Orange Free State had good cause to know.

It had been arranged that at Kimberley I was to be the guest, for a time, of Major Drury, formerly of the Cape Mounted Riflemen. I fancy that Major Drury must at the time have been on leave, for when I met him years afterwards he was in an Indian cavalry regiment. He belonged to a "mess" at what was known as the "West End." The members of this mess were camped together on a rise a few hundred yards from the western end of the mine, in the

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middle of an immense, straggling city of galvanized iron and canvas.

It was when Major Drury's guest that I first met Cecil John Rhodes. Major Drury, Dr. Thorne (formerly of Queenstown), Mr. George Paton (who afterwards represented Barkly West in Parliament), Mr. H. C. Becher (subsequently well known in Hatton Garden), Mr. Rhodes and the latter's brother, Herbert Rhodes, all belonged to this mess. Soon after my arrival came Frank Rhodes, a bright-faced lad of eighteen, but who looked considerably younger. He had passed the necessary examinations and was awaiting a nomination to the army. I have never met any one possessing such charm of manner as did Frank Rhodes at this period. He was, I fancy, a year or so younger than his brother Cecil.

Herbert Rhodes, the eldest brother, was a tall, lean, hatchet-faced man of, I should say, about twenty-seven. Although sparsely built his strength was considerable, and he was a splendid boxer. Cecil Rhodes was long and loose-limbed, with blue eyes, ruddy complexion, and light, curly hair. He was, I think, some three or four years my senior. The Rhodes brothers occupied a large tent stretched over a skeleton framework and

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measuring about sixteen by eighteen feet. I fancy the site of our camp was the spot known afterwards as "St. Augustines," where a mine was subsequently opened.

Within a few yards of the mess-tent were camped Norman Garstin and his partner "Tommy" Townsend. Garstin has since become noted as a painter. He is, or recently was, the patriarch of the artist colony at Newlyn. Although Garstin and Townsend did not belong to the Drury-Rhodes mess, they were very intimate with the members thereof. After the completion of my term as Major Drury's guest, during which I slept in my wagon, I pitched a tent a few yards away, and messed for a time with Garstin and his partner. Soon afterwards the original mess was broken up and reorganized. Several members left and others took their places. Among the latter were Garstin and I. Another member was Hugh McLeod, who is, I fancy, still living at Kimberley. I struck my tent and went to live with the Rhodes brothers in theirs.

Everything connected with any phase in the life of a man such as Cecil John Rhodes is necessarily of interest, so I will endeavour to recall what I can of our mutual relations. I received several kindly favours at his hands, but

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we never became really intimate. He was even then somewhat intolerant in discussion. While Rhodes was already a man in mind and body, I was still a boy, and an ignorant, self-opinionated, argumentative one at that. Moreover, I was given to practical joking, and I played off one practical joke upon Cecil Rhodes of which I am ashamed to this day. When we met, after not having seen each other for nearly a quarter of a century, I felt sure he still remembered this (to me) discreditable episode. However, with Frank Rhodes, whose age was nearer mine, I was more in sympathy. We were, as a matter of fact, intimate friends the whole of the period—upwards of a year—during which we dwelt together. Herbert Rhodes was generally away on some adventure or another. He appeared to be one of those men to whom constant change was an imperative necessity.

I can very clearly picture Cecil Rhodes in one of his characteristic attitudes. After dinner it was his wont to lean forward with both elbows on the table and his mouth slightly open. He had a habit, when thinking, of rubbing his chin gently with his forefinger. Very often he would sit in the attitude described for a very long time, without joining in whatever conversation

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happened to be going on. His manner and expression suggested that his thoughts were far away, but occasionally some interjection would indicate that, to a certain extent, he was keeping in touch with the current topic. Indeed, it often seemed to me that the larger part of his brain was dealing with something of which no one else had cognizance. Mr. George Paton used to banter him severely for this peculiarity, but the banter was always taken in good part.

My first transaction with Cecil Rhodes was over the sale of my wagon. Within a few months of my arrival the discovery of gold at Marabastad was much discussed, and an expedition thither, under the leadership of Herbert Rhodes, was organized. There was difficulty in the matter of procuring a suitable wagon; eventually I was persuaded to lend mine for the trip. When the expedition returned, about four months afterwards, the wagon was a wreck. Naturally I demurred to taking it back.

The question arose as to what compensation I was to receive. It was known that the vehicle had cost me only £13, but I had, shortly after my arrival, refused an offer of £35 for it. I now demanded £30. Cecil Rhodes offered £25, which I declined to accept. After discuss-

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ing the matter several times we agreed one afternoon to settle the dispute by means of a game of euchre. If Rhodes won, the price was to be £25; if victory declared for me, £30 had to be paid. The first two games out of three, "seven up," to decide.

A bag of mealie-meal stood in the corner of the tent; I laid this prone so that it might do duty as a table. Rhodes and I sat down on the ground, one at each side of the meal-bag, and the game began. At first luck was on the side of my opponent; he ran away with the first game before I had scored a point, and was soon "all but" in the second. Then fortune favoured me and after a hard tussle I won. When at Groote Schuur in 1894 I reminded Mr. Rhodes of this occurrence, and found that he remembered it in every detail.

Among the visitors to our mess-tent I recall several who have since played prominent parts on the world-stage. Among these may be mentioned Mr. H. C. Seppings Wright, now an artist on the staff of the *Illustrated London News*. He occasionally made use of a strange expression: "Some day I mean to go home and get the drawing." He apparently meant by this that he intended learning to draw. That

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Mr. Wright did "get the drawing" is quite evident from the work he turns out and the position he holds. I have a vivid recollection of an excellent pair of top-boots and a very wide scarlet cummerbund which he used to wear.

Another frequent visitor was Archibald Campbell, who afterwards distinguished himself in the war between Russia and Turkey, fighting for the Turks. He came to be known as "Schipka" Campbell on account of some daring deed connected with the defence of the Schipka Pass, when he was under the command of the traitorous Sulieman Pasha. Archibald Campbell's brother Alister was another guest, also the former's partner, Reginald Fairlie, who subsequently became a painter, and was the hero of a very sad and exceedingly dramatic romance. I shall have occasion to refer to Archibald Campbell later.

Mr. J. X. Merriman dined with us several times. He was at the time in partnership with Mr. H. C. Becher. Mr. Barry, the first Recorder of the Griqualand High Court, afterwards Sir Jacob Barry, Judge President of the Eastern Districts Court, also was our guest. Of the original members of the mess there are, so far as I know,

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only four alive. These are Mr. George Paton, Norman Garstin, Hugh McLeod, and myself.

I well remember one Saturday midnight when the Rhodeses, Campbell, Fairlie, Garstin, and I returned from a mild spree at Du Toit's Pan. Close to our camp was a Wesleyan church built of galvanized iron, and with a rather discordant-toned bell at one end. My companions threw me on to the roof and forced me, under stress of pelting stones, to climb up the steep pitch and ring the bell. When the indignant inhabitants of the surrounding tents swarmed out my friends decamped, leaving me stranded. However, the sand was soft, so I dropped down and managed to escape.

Cecil Rhodes had a rusty-black pony named "Bandersnatch" which I occasionally rode when shooting, game being more or less plentiful within a few miles of the mine. He also owned one of the strangest-looking dogs I have ever seen. It had no vestige of a tail, and, generally, it bore a strong resemblance to an exaggerated guinea-pig.

In the days I write of Cecil and Herbert Rhodes were working a claim near the north end of No. 10 Road. They found a fair number of diamonds, but no large stones. I was work-

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ing on shares a small piece of ground in the same road, the property of Gray Barber. By this time the rudimentary plan of sorting the gravel on one's claim had, of necessity, been superseded. Every digger had a depositing-floor to which his ground was carted or barrowed. Of the original surface of the mine only the roadways were left standing, vast chasms of varying depth lying between. The "stuff"—a green, tenacious, decomposed rock of the consistency of very tough pot-clay, but granular and abounding in mica—would be loosened with a pick, hauled up to the level of the road by means of bucket, rope, and pulley, and then conveyed to the depositing-floor.

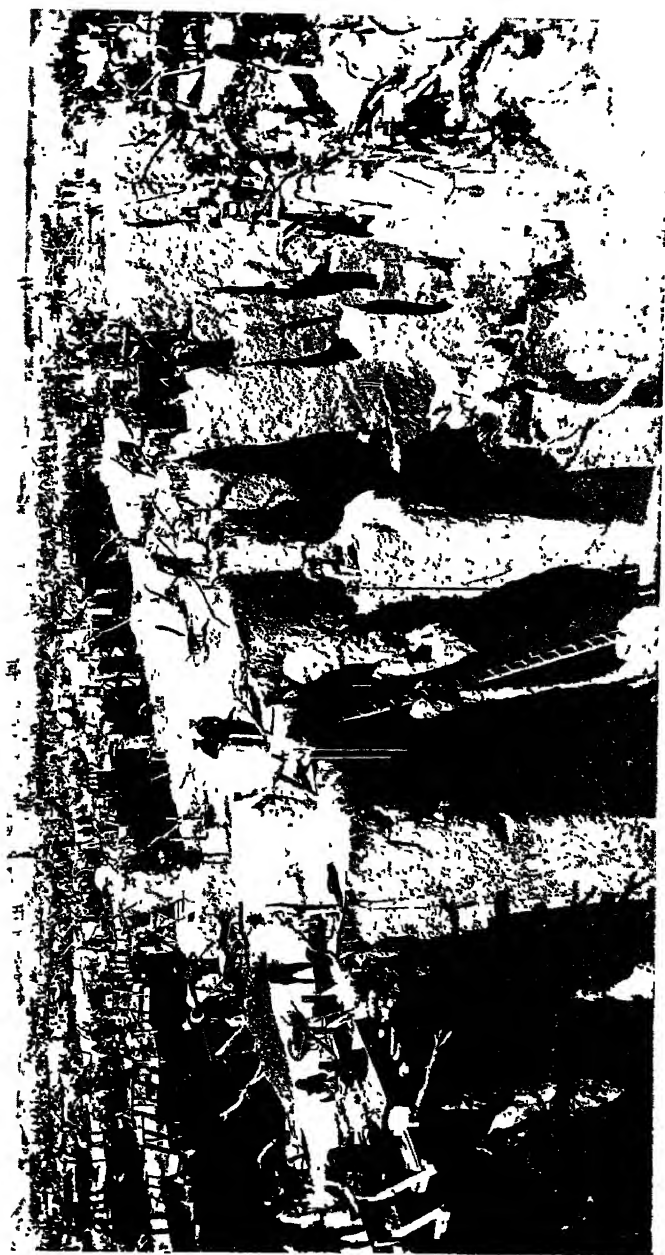
The bulk of the native labour at the diamond-fields was drawn from Bechuanaland and the northern Transvaal. Many of the natives from the latter vicinity belonged to the Baphedi tribe, whose chief was the celebrated Sekukuni. These people used to arrive in an unspeakably miserable physical condition; they had travelled hundreds of miles almost without food. Literally, they were nothing but skin and bone. But after a week's feeding on *impoop*, as they called the mealie-meal porridge which was their staple food at the mines, they began to pick up. At

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the end of a month they would be sleek and in first-rate fettle.

It is practically certain that before leaving home these people had been instructed in the art of diamond-stealing. That such was the case may, I think, be inferred from the following incident. A friend of mine bought six "boys" (we used to buy these creatures from the labour touts at £1 per head), and put them the same day to work on his depositing-floor, smashing lumps of "stuff." He and I were sitting on a heap of siftings watching the poor creatures, who were in an unspeakably wretched condition. They were perfectly naked, except that each wore the usual *stert reim*. In the course of conversation my friend and I began speculating as to whether one of them would know a diamond if he saw it.

Just then a certain kind of "sell" was often practised. One would cut a piece of alum into the ordinary octahedron form and scrape it so as to round off the edges. Such a production would make a capital imitation of a white, frosted stone. The "sell" was practised thus: You would go to the sorting-table of a friend, stealthily insert the lump of alum into his heap of gravel, and watch until he found it. The first



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thing a man usually did when he found a diamond was to put it into his mouth so as to remove the dust. The face of a man thus "sold," when he tasted the alum, was not a pretty sight.

On the occasion in question I happened to have in my pocket a carefully prepared lump of alum which, had it been a diamond, would have weighed about fifteen carats. After indicating to my friend what I was about to do, I walked up close to the heap of clods, bent down as though to tie my bootlace, and set the mock diamond on the ground. Then I returned to where I had been sitting. For a minute or so no one was working near the spot, but soon one of the natives shambled away from his companions and came towards it. He put his foot on the lump of alum and shambled on, but the lump had disappeared. My companion wanted to spring up at once, but I restrained him. The native went on pounding clods for a few minutes, and then made off as though to pass behind a big heap of rubbish. We followed and seized him suddenly from behind. He had the lump of alum firmly grasped between his toes.

Cecil Rhodes's depositing-floor was large and very conveniently situated—close to the edge of

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the mine. He very kindly gave me a portion of it to use, thus lightening my labours considerably. But a catastrophe happened. One Sunday morning a shock was felt; this was followed by a rumbling roar. There was talk of earthquakes. Soon, however, we found out what had happened, the whole of the northern portion of No. 10 Road had collapsed into the chasm on its western side. Had this happened on a week-day, at least a hundred men would have lost their lives; probably I would have shared their fate. This occurrence put a stop to my work. Expensive tackle—including staging, stretched wire ropes, windlass, and iron pulley-travellers—now became necessary for getting out one's stuff. As my little capital was quite inadequate to all this, I surrendered the claim to its owner.

Herbert Rhodes was a restless being—a stormy petrel ever on the wing seeking adventures. I was told a few years since of an escapade which I will here relate. While believing the story to be literally true, I do not guarantee its authenticity.

It is believed that in the caverns of what used to be Sekukuni's country considerable stores of diamonds, taken back from the fields by

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Baphedi labourers in the early days, lie concealed. Now, Sekukuni was a warrior of parts, he defied for several years the Transvaal, when the administration of President Burgers attempted to levy tribute on him in the form of hut tax. It was his great ambition to obtain a cannon for the defence of his mountain stronghold. Accordingly, towards the end of the seventies, he offered a heavy price—no less than a pint of clear, flawless diamonds—to any one who would supply such a weapon. Herbert Rhodes heard of the offer, opened communications with the chief, and agreed to provide a cannon on the terms specified.

Gun-running—the supply of firearms to savage natives—is rightly looked upon as the unpardonable sin by men whose opinions are worth regarding. But this case fell not into the ordinary category of gun-running. A cannon, for purposes of offence or defence, would have been of no more use to Sekukuni than a gramophone. However, the chief did not know this. He possessed the diamonds, but they were of no use whatever to him. He desired the artillery ; this could not have been of any use to him for the purpose he had in view. The gun was, as a matter of fact, a weapon so utterly obsolete

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that it could have been of no use to any one. Logically, therefore, the transaction proposed amounted to x minus against x minus. But the diamonds would have been of great use to Herbert Rhodes, while the cannon would have been—as a symbol—priceless to the chief; he would have slept sounder o' nights through the realization that he possessed an engine capable, at least, of making a tremendous noise.

The gun, it appears, was conveyed to Lourenço Marques in a small French barque, Herbert Rhodes accompanying it. At night it was lowered into a boat, which was rowed up the Maputa River to a specified landing-place. Sekukuni had sent an *induna* bearing the pint of diamonds and accompanied by a number of carriers, with directions to keep to the valley of the Olifant River as far as the Lebomba Range, and then to skirt the eastern slope of that range to the Komati River. Here they were to await a message telling of the arrival of the gun.

Herbert Rhodes was not alone a first-rate boxer, but was unduly fond of giving practical illustration of his skill. On board the barque he quarrelled with another man and gave the latter a severe thrashing. This man nursed revengeful feelings. Having found out about the

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forwarding of the gun, he managed to slip ashore early on the following morning and give information to the authorities. The Portuguese commander at once made preparations to send a company of soldiers for the purpose of apprehending the gun-runners. In the meantime a man at Lourenço Marques who was in Herbert Rhodes's confidence dispatched a swift runner ahead to warn Rhodes of his danger. This runner arrived some considerable time before the soldiers, so Rhodes had ample time in which to make preparations.

The way he dealt with the difficulty was simple and ought to have been effective. He tied a rope to the gun and a piece of twine to the rope. Then he flung rope and gun into the river, fastened the end of the twine to a floating fragment of wood, lit a cigarette, and sat down to await developments. In due time the Portuguese force arrived. The officer in charge was accompanied by an interpreter. Rhodes and his companions were at once arrested. The former protested hotly, and inquired in indignant terms as to the reason for such an outrage. When informed of the charge against him he affected the greatest astonishment, and challenged the officer to institute a search. This was done

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at once, and thoroughly ; needless to say, nothing of an incriminating nature was found.

The officer now changed his tone, becoming very apologetic. He probably knew by experience that for a blunder such as this evidently was, he, rather than his superior, would have to bear the brunt. But Rhodes was implacable ; the world, he said, would ring with the outrage. As soon as the British Government learned of the disgraceful manner in which one of its subjects had been treated, a man-of-war would be sent round from Simon's Town to knock the Portuguese shanties about the Portuguese ears, &c. The officer, now thoroughly frightened, became more and more abject. However, Rhodes determined to get full change out of him before climbing from his high horse. But he delayed too long ; he failed to make use of the loophole of escape that Fortune showed him.

Rhodes forgot three things, namely, that the Maputa is a tidal river, that several hours had elapsed since the gun had been heaved overboard, and that the tide was falling. One of the soldiers, in strolling about, noticed something unusual just beneath the surface of the water. To this he called the attention of a non-

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commissioned officer. The latter investigated further, and the gun was hauled out. Rhodes now tumbled incontinently from his high horse and the officer at once mounted it. The search party marched back in triumph to Lourenço Marques, escorting Rhodes and his companions as prisoners. The companions were placed at once on board their ship.

Herbert Rhodes, now in sorry case, was incarcerated in the fortress. This, in the seventies, was a horrible place in which to be confined. The cells were small, dark, and verminous ; the flagged passages full of man-traps in the form of unexpected steps. I do not know what part of the building the prisoner was confined in, but if his cell were anything like the one from which, in 1874, I helped to carry the dead body of my poor friend Pat Foote, he was not to be envied. However, the durance apparently did not last long. The captive probably made himself disagreeable—a thing he could do most effectively. He was, perhaps, found to be an embarrassment. Possibly that potent solver of difficulties, palm-oil, may have greased the bolts of his dungeon so effectively that they slipped back some dark, convenient night. At all events he got away after a comparatively short imprison-

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ment Nothing has been recorded as to what became of the pint of diamonds.

Herbert Rhodes came to a terrible end. A few years after the event just related, he was living in a hut on the shores of Lake Nyassa. One night, accompanied by a friend, he returned from a journey. Desiring refreshment he found none available except some Johanna rum in an unopened keg. This liquor is extremely strong and highly inflammable. Rhodes knocked in the bung; some of the spirit spurted out and became ignited.

The keg burst and the contents wrapped the unhappy man in a sheet of flame. After this had with difficulty been quenched, a messenger was dispatched to Blantyre, some forty miles away, to call for medical aid. I believe it was Dr. Jane Waterston, now of Cape Town, who came to the sufferer's assistance. But he died in great agony shortly after her arrival.



KIMBERLEY MINE IN 1912.

CHAPTER VI

Big gambling—Von Schlichmann—Norman Garstin—The painter of St. Michael's Mount—Start for the goldfields—“I am going to be hanged”—Plentifulness of game—Snakes in an ant-hill—Nazareth—Game in the High Veld—Narrow escape from frost-bite—A shooting-match—Lydenburg—Painful tramping—“Artful Joe”—Penalty for suicide—Pilgrim's Rest—Experiences of a “new chum”—Tent-making—Explorations—The Great Plateau—Prospect of the low country—Elands.

I WAS told the following tale on good authority : Three men held a claim jointly in the “New Rush” mine. They worked it for about six months, and found a considerable number of diamonds. The weather grew hot and the camp unhealthy ; many were dying of fever. Dust-storms raged, and the flies became almost intolerable. All three wanted to get away ; they longed for the coast and the cool sea-breezes. One of the partners proposed that two of them should go away on a visit and the third stay behind to keep the claim going, the question as to who should stay being settled by lot. . Another pro-

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posed, as an amendment, that they should toss "odd man out" who was to own the claim ; then each could please himself. No sooner said than done. Three coins spun into the air, and two third-portions of a claim, worth even then about £2,000, were lost and won within the space of ten seconds.

As might be imagined, gambling was very rife. I well remember one night looking on, awe-struck at the magnitude of the stakes, at a game of loo. The play took place at an eating-house called "The Gridiron," the proprietor of which was an ex-cavalry man named Richardson. The building was of the usual eating-house type ; it had a wooden frame covered with canvas. At right angles to a central passage were tables with benches at each side, the tables being cut off from each other by partitions.

At the game in question there were four players : Richardson (the proprietor), H. B. Webb (a noted diamond-dealer), his partner Joe Posno, and the celebrated Ikey Sonnenberg. Some idea of the magnitude of the stakes may be formed when it is stated that at one time £1,700 was in the pool.

A man I knew fairly well was Von Schlichmann. He had been secretary to Count Arnim

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when that unfortunate nobleman was German Ambassador to France. When Arnim fell, the possibilities of the diplomatic career, for which his secretary had been intended, were destroyed. Von Schlichmann was a man of extraordinary strength, and was remarkably handsome in both face and figure. His curled yellow hair was thick, long, and silky in texture. One of his favourite ways of showing his strength was to get four men to grasp handfuls of his locks, each with one hand, as firmly as they could. He would then sway his head round with a jerk, and the four would fall, sprawling, in different directions.

I think it was in 1875 that Von Schlichmann went north and entered the military service of the Transvaal. It was, I know, when preparations were being made to attack Sekukuni. I was one of those enrolled in the expedition that escorted the arms and ammunition for that campaign from Delagoa Bay to Pretoria in the latter part of 1874. So far as my memory serves me, Von Schlichmann arrived early in the following year. But he was killed in one of the attacks on Sekukuni's stronghold. When leading his men a bullet pierced his lungs. He lay exposed on the flat rock on which he fell,

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waving his sword and encouraging his men to advance to the attack, until blood choked his utterance. One of my best friends, a man named Macaulay, was shot on the same occasion. He received a bullet in the brain from which he, unfortunately, did not die until after several hours of great agony. Macaulay was noted at Pilgrim's Rest as the first in the locality who used dynamite in mining operations.

But I have allowed myself to run ahead too fast, so must hark back to Kimberley, as "New Rush" had now come to be called.

One of my most intimate friends was Norman Garstin, a man whom to know was to love. Once he nearly frightened me to death. He had a habit of sleeping with his eyes wide open, but of this I was quite unaware. Returning home late one night I struck a match and saw him lying on his back, his eyes fixed and glassy. I seized him by the shoulders and, much to his disgust, dragged him into a sitting posture. Garstin was an accomplished draughtsman. His caricatures, which were never ill-natured, and his black and white "parables" brought him wide popularity in the days when we foregathered.

The *Cape Times* was started by Garstin in

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conjunction with the late Mr. F. Y. St. Leger. I forget exactly when this happened, but I think it was in the late seventies. After he had severed his connection with the *Cape Times*, Garstin went to Europe, where he studied serious art for several years. I was his guest at Newlyn, Penzance, in 1899; at the time of my visit he was patriarch of the well-known artist colony there. Garstin's pictures, although they have never been "boomed," and have consequently not reached public favour, are thought very highly of by other artists. To record that they have been hung in the Royal Academy is like saying of an author's books that they have been on sale in a railway bookstall. Two very beautiful examples of his work which I specially recall are "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Lost Piece of Silver."

Garstin told me a very significant tale. He kept an art school at Newlyn. One day an intelligent young Cornish miner came and asked to be received as a pupil; he at once paid a quarter's fees in advance. Then he informed Garstin that he wanted to learn to paint pictures of St. Michael's Mount. Garstin, finding that his pupil was ignorant of the very rudiments of painting, endeavoured to explain that some pre-

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liminary training was necessary ; but the young man would not argue the point. St. Michael's Mount, and nothing else, was to be the subject ; all he wanted Garstin to do was to show him how to begin, and afterwards give him an occasional direction.

Canvas, easel, brushes, and paints were all purchased according to a list which Garstin supplied him with. He wanted, he said, everything of the best. A pupil is a pupil—especially when he pays in advance, and when pictures are not as saleable as they should be—so Garstin did all he could to further this particular pupil's desire. The latter was very apt ; after a comparatively short time he was able to turn out some daubs, the meaning of which could be more or less recognized.

When he had outraged St. Michael's Mount from one side, Garstin's pupil attacked it from another. St. Michael's Mount at early morning, at high noon, at dewy eve, and at all intermediate hours ; St. Michael's Mount in spring, in summer, in autumn, and in winter ; St. Michael's Mount lapped by a calm sea, or smitten by spuming waves. He made uncanny progress. Before the second quarter was at an end this remarkable pupil had produced several presentments of the

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celebrated Cornish excrescence, which were not much worse than average lodging-house oleographs, and were quite as suggestive of their subject as is Turner's celebrated masterpiece. When the quarter came to an end, the pupil announced that he considered he had now learnt enough. Accordingly he left.

Shortly afterwards Garstin was astonished to hear that his former pupil had set up a studio on his own account at St. Ives, a few miles away. It was quite true. Here he sat all day long, painting pictures of St. Michael's Mount in assorted sizes. I forget how many pictures he finished each week, but the output was large. This is the explanation: Johannesburg at the time contained many Cornishmen; to the average Cornishman St. Michael's Mount is what Mecca is to the Moslem. Garstin's shrewd disciple had his daubs framed and sent to the Rand. Here they were all absorbed, fetching prices which left an average profit of £5 each. And all this time Garstin's own beautiful creations were wanting purchasers.

In 1873 rich alluvial gold was reported to have been struck in the Lydenburg district, which was then the extreme limit which civilization had reached in the north-eastern Transvaal. I

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decided to go and try my fortune at the scene of the discovery. While passing through Pretoria I met a man in the street whose face I thought I knew. He advanced towards me with outstretched hand. Yes, it was Cooper—the man during whose wedding festivities the big circus-tent had been blown down. He greeted me with great effusion, a circumstance I thought remarkable, as I had not known him well. The day was warm, so I suggested that we should have a drink together. He agreed with alacrity, so we adjourned to the nearest bar.

“Well, Cooper,” said I, “how are you getting on here?”

At once his face fell.

“Very badly indeed,” he replied, and heaved a sigh.

“Why, what is the matter?”

“Well, the fact is, I am going to be hanged.”

I thought he was joking, but it was not so; he was actually under sentence of death. He had gone on the spree and started painting Pretoria red some months previously. When a constable attempted to arrest him, he drew a revolver and shot the unfortunate officer fatally. In due course he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead.



CHURCH STREET, PREFORIA, IN 1873

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"But, Cooper," I queried, "why don't they hang you?"

"Well," he replied, "they don't like hanging white men up here, and just now President Burgers is laying out a rose-garden. I understand that kind of thing, so I go down every day and attend to the work. I was just taking a stroll when I met you."

"Look here, Cooper," I said with emphasis, "if I were you I would clear out without delay. The State Attorney may change his mind; some new man may take on the job—a man with strict ideas. Clear out while you can."

"Oh, I don't think there's any danger," replied Cooper, but he looked uneasy.

"Was it a white man or a black man that you shot?"

"It was a white man, right enough."

"Then clear out while there is still time," said I.

Some months afterwards I met a Pretoria man named Brodrick at Pilgrim's Rest. I inquired about Cooper. What Brodrick told me proved the soundness of my advice. The Executive Council had suddenly awakened to a sense of its duty, and decided to allow the law to take its

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course. Fortunately Brodrick and some others got wind of this, so they managed to get the culprit out of gaol. Mounted on one horse and leading another, Cooper rode for his life westward towards Bechuanaland, pursued by the Transvaal police. However, he escaped. I have never heard of him since.

Game was plentiful at certain places along the road. I remember a locality called "Leeuw Doorns" where blesbuck, wildebeeste, and quagga were in almost incredible abundance. As far as the eye could reach the veld was dappled with herds of these and other animals. So far as I can remember, this place was about three days' wagon journey beyond Pretoria.

Before reaching Pretoria we outspanned near the *winkel* of a man named Jacobi, a former resident of Cradock. This was within a few miles of where Johannesburg stands to-day. I remember Jacobi telling me that a nugget of gold had been found in the drift of a river close to his house. Here I had an adventure.

I took my rifle and strolled down the river-bank after some reedbuck, which I had been told were to be found there. I wounded a buck; it hobbled away with difficulty. I ran after it, but the grass was long, and I had a difficulty

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in keeping the animal in sight. In my course stood an ant-hill about four feet high. Endeavouring to get within view of the buck, I sprang to the top of the ant-hill, but it was hollow, and the crust collapsed under me. I looked down and found that several snakes were crawling and writhing about my feet. I had some difficulty in getting out, for as soon as I got foothold on the edge it broke under my weight. The weather was cold, and the snakes had taken refuge in the cavity.

I reached the town of Nazareth (now called Middelburg) early one morning. The houses numbered, I should say, from thirty to forty, and stood somewhat wide apart from each other. In making my way to a shop which stood about in the middle of the township, and which had a very high stoep, I noticed that the streets were full of game spoors. I spoke of this to the storekeeper.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "the game comes in here every night. Look there."

I glanced in the direction indicated. Just beyond the outskirts of the town were herds of wildebeeste, blesbuck, and quagga grazing quietly about, like so many herds of cattle. But they were not so tame as they looked, as I found

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later in the day, when I went towards them with my rifle.

In passing through the High Veld, as the country to the north-east of Nazareth was called, I first saw the spoor of a lion. I left the wagon, which had been obliged to make a very wide detour for the purpose of avoiding swampy ground, and was making straight across country towards a point close to which I knew the road passed. On my left was a very large *leegte*—a shallow, nearly level valley. For miles of its course this was filled with swamp, out of which tall reeds grew.

Game was very abundant. I shot several blesbuck and wildebeeste, I am sorry to say, for the gratification of mere lust of slaughter, as I could not possibly carry away the meat. In passing over a gravelled ridge I noticed a dried drop of blood. I looked more closely and found the tracks of some large animal. This I followed, in the direction of the reeds, until I reached some sandy ground. Then I saw that the track was undoubtedly that of a lion. The animal had evidently killed during the previous night and carried the meat to its lair among the reeds. But this was a mere guess ; I did not pursue my investigations.

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Next day I left the wagon long before daylight, and started for another tramp—this time along a course I had mapped out the previous afternoon. It was bitterly and unseasonably cold. There was no wind, but the hoar-frost lay almost as thick as if a fairly heavy shower of snow had fallen. I was wearing veldschoens, but had no socks. As I trampled through the grass the frost spicules from the tussocks I brushed against filled the spaces between the leather and my feet.

I began to suffer excruciating pain. I thought day would never break. My feet felt as though they did not belong to me. Soon they ceased to be painful, but the pain-area had travelled up my legs. Having heard of frost-bite and its serious effects, I became much alarmed.

Day broke at length. There was so far no game in sight. I thought of kindling a fire, but could find no fuel. Just ahead a low, narrow dyke crossed my course. I crept to this on my hands and knees, and peered through the stones. Yes, there stood a small herd of blesbuck; they were not more than eighty yards away. With great difficulty, for the light was still bad and I was shaking like an aspen, I got my bead on the largest buck. I fired; the animal sprang into

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the air and rolled over. I hobbled forward to where the creature lay. It was stone dead ; shot through the heart. I pulled the carcase up to a convenient stone, cut it open with my hunting-knife and thrust my feet into its interior. During the ensuing half-hour I think I suffered more intense physical agony than I have ever endured in the same period of time. My feet must have been very nearly frost-bitten, and the process of circulation being restored was exquisitely painful. I verily believe that my life was saved through the accident of those blesbucks being behind the dyke and close enough for me to be able to kill one. The sun was high in the heavens before I was able to resume my journey.

One day I came across an encampment of Boer hunters. Tired of killing game, they were indulging in the diversion of a shooting-match. I was cordially welcomed, and invited to join in the competition. The farmers had brought their families with them ; some dozen or so wagons had been outspanned together, and several tents had been pitched.

Girls, some of them very pretty, dispensed coffee in *kommetjes* to the competitors. The competition was arranged on very peculiar lines. The targets were circular, and could not have

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measured more than about five inches in diameter. The range was a hundred paces. Each competitor lay on a feather-bed, which was covered with a *kaross*, and rested his rifle on a pile of pillows. The price of a *lootje*—that is to say, the fee for entry—was sixpence, and each could take as many *lootjes* as he liked. The number of shots fired in each case was five, and these were fired in succession. The prizes were sheep, sacks of meal, and small casks of vinegar.

In spite of the smallness of the target there were but few misses. Shots were judged to a hair's-breadth, and the judging was perfectly fair. Strangely enough I managed to win a sack of meal and a barrel of vinegar. As these were of no use to me, I exchanged them for fifteen shillings and a hundred Westley Richards cartridges. My shooting caused me to find favour in the eyes of these farmers; I was cordially invited to remain and hunt with them for as long as I liked. I might have done worse than accept; the life they were leading was a lordly one. However, I had to bid them a regretful farewell. Then I tramped on after the wagon.

The people with whom I was travelling did not go beyond Lydenburg, so from there I had to tramp to Pilgrim's Rest, my destination, a

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distance of about forty miles. I tied my worldly possessions into a "swag"—a process in which I was skilfully assisted by an old miner, with whom I casually foregathered. Then I set forth with three companions, likewise casual acquaintances. We all belonged to that despised class known as "new chums"—that is, men who were without practical experience in the art of gold-mining.

We started early in the afternoon. Our pilgrimage was a painful one; my swag was heavy, and the straps galled my unaccustomed shoulders. After walking about fifteen miles we camped in a small grove of trees. Here we shivered through an apparently interminable night around an inadequate fire. None of us were experienced bushmen, and we had neglected to gather sufficient fuel. The wind was cold, and I had not then acquired that toughness of fibre and insensibility to extremes of heat and cold which long wanderings and many hardships afterwards gave me.

Two only of my companions are worth recalling. One was an ex-larrikin from Melbourne, who went by the name of "Artful Joe"; his real name I never learnt. Joe had been the victim of a horrible accident in the Kimberley

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mine about a year previously. He had fallen from one of the "roads" sixty feet sheer on to a sorting-table at the bottom of the claim. Both his legs had been broken in several places. I was not present when the accident occurred, but I witnessed the tedious and terrible process of hoisting the injured man out of the pit and conveying him to the hospital. With the exception of a slight lameness, and of being more or less bandy-legged, Joe had not suffered much permanent injury.

He sang many comic songs to cheer us up during that night of dolour, filling the intervals between the ditties with anathemas against his South African luck and realistic stories of his Australian experiences. He had lived, he told us, for several years by earning pennies in the Melbourne streets. Outside the sculleries of the large hotels, or where banquets had been held, barrels of feast-fragments used to be set. In these barrels the street-public were allowed to "dab" with a fork, at the rate of a penny a time, for discarded fragments of food. Occasionally a rich reward would fall to the enterprising "dabber." Joe's most dazzling stroke of luck happened once when he dabbed out a whole fowl (*feaoul*, he called it). This must have been

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rendered possible through some extraordinary lapse of culinary carefulness. The description was so appetizing that I am sure the wraith of that long-digested bird hovered over our meagre banquet.

The second pilgrim was a Jew named L—. He was extremely short of stature, but wore the biggest boots I have ever seen; literally, they covered him to the waist. L—, never having previously roughed it, was the greatest sufferer; his misery was so great that he wept bitterly, refusing to be comforted. He sickened us through his utter want of grit. When, towards morning, he slept, I took his boots and hid them behind a bush some distance away. His lamentations on missing them were long and loud. The third of my companions was a mere tramp, sodden with drink—a man utterly without significance, except as an example of what to avoid.

Some months afterwards, at Pilgrim's Rest, L— attempted to commit suicide by hanging himself. He was cut down before life was extinct, and on recovery was prosecuted for *felo-de-se*. At the time Major Macdonald, the Gold Commissioner, happened to be away, his place being temporarily filled by Mr. Mansfield, the postmaster. The terms used by the latter

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in sentencing L—— caused great amusement. They were as follows :—

“ As you have been guilty of an attempt only, I will fine you £5, but if you had succeeded I should have felt bound to pass a much more severe sentence.”

“ Artful Joe ” and I were the only two members of the party who were fit to travel next day, so after leaving the others the largest share of our joint stock of provisions (meal and tea), and restoring the boots to their disconsolate owner, we went on. We abandoned the road and travelled by a footpath across country in the compass direction of our objective. It was in the middle of a calm, sunny afternoon that we reached the eastern edge of the mountain plateau overlooking the Blyde River Valley. The prospect was a magnificent one. North and south the great mountain ranges rolled away, seemingly to infinity. Before us, winding down through the range on the opposite side of the valley, lay Pilgrim’s Creek, the goal of our long endeavour.

Between two and three miles from where the creek flowed into the Blyde River lay the little township. Among the farther sinuosities of the valley were groups of tents. With the eye of imagination we could almost detect the nuggets

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gleaming at the bottom of the stream. We had not yet learnt the gold-diggers' variant of a well-known proverb: "Nothing is gold that glitters."

We scrambled down the steep mountain-side, between patches of forest and over reefs of quartz. The latter had a special interest for us: we were now in the land of gold—and who could tell where the clues of Fortune were not to be picked up? That afternoon the world was full of glorious possibilities.

We waded across the Blyde River drift and ascended the slope towards the town, which nestled behind a stony rise. Soon, with light hearts and lighter pockets (mine contained but seven shillings), we trudged up the one and only street. Here and there stood a digger, or a store-keeper, glancing with amused contempt at the raw "new chums." I happened to be wearing a pair of new moleskin breeches that were several sizes too wide for me. These were the occasion of a good deal of derisive comment. One man sang out to a friend across the street—

"Say, Jim, them looks like town-made legs and country-made trousers, eh?"

Joe's limp, also, was the subject of ribaldry. On the whole we must have been a strange-



WINTER CAMP WILDERNESS

From the "Illustrated London News," July 3, 1875

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looking pair. Feeling rather small under the scrutiny (not bethinking us that within a very few months we would be putting on similar airs of superiority towards weary tramps arriving under like conditions) we were glad when we had passed through the township. We strolled up the winding valley, admiring the landscape and wondering how we were going to set about earning a living. The scenery was enchanting, but scenery by itself is not a satisfying diet.

On our course up the creek we passed numbers of parties at work. Owing to the rugged nature of the Pilgrim's Valley, the pathway zigzagged a great deal. Some acquaintances of mine were said to be working among the terraces high up—far beyond the Middle Camp—and their tent was my objective. Once we heard a cheery hail from the bed of the creek, and saw a man waving a tin pannikin at us. This meant an invitation to tea, which we gladly accepted. The claim was worked by a couple of Australians; they were on a fair lead, so they told us. They gave us a supply of tobacco, and told us to call round again as soon as we "got stony," and they would see what they could do for us. This evidence of sympathy gave me, at least, a feeling of confidence which I badly needed.

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We reached the Middle Camp ; as we passed Tom Craddock's bar a stalwart, bearded, and more or less inebriated digger came out with vociferous welcome and insisted on our going in and drinking at his expense. In the bar was a man I knew ; seeing him had the effect of making me feel more or less at home. We sat and rested for a few moments ; then I got hold of the idea that we were expected to stand return treat to our host and his friends. In this I was, as it happened, quite mistaken. Joe had no money whatever, so I had to pay. My capital was now reduced to two shillings.

The man I met in the bar, whom I knew, told me that the friends I was seeking had, a few days previously, moved down-creek. We had passed their camp without knowing it, a couple of miles back. Joe and I were now dog-tired, so decided to go back to a warm nook we had noticed in a kloof on the way up, and spend the night there. We reached this spot just as night was falling, and "dossed" down. Fuel was plentiful, so we made a lordly fire. We worked up our remaining meal into dampers and cooked them in the ashes. We found there was enough tea left for two brews ; one of these we prepared at once. Then we filled our pipes with some

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of the kind Australians' seasonable gift, and sat puffing in a condition of mind that approached contentment.

It had been tacitly assumed that Joe and I were to be mates, although nothing definite had been said on the subject. We conversed for a while after supper; then silence fell upon us. I spoke several times to Joe, but he did not answer. Just as I was wrapping myself in my blanket for the night, Joe turned abruptly to me and said—

“Look here, I ain't your sort; you'll get a better mate. We'll shake hands in the morning and say goodbye.”

When I awoke in the grey dawn Joe had already risen, lit the fire, packed his swag, and brewed our last pinch of tea in the billy. We drank to each other's good fortune in silence. Then, after a hand-press, Joe humped his swag and strode away, leaving me with moistened eyes. I felt I had lost my only friend. I have foregathered with much worse men than “Artful Joe.”

Early that day I found my friends—some men I had known at Kimberley. They agreed to allow me to work with them for my keep, my services then not being worth more. I knew nothing

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whatever about gold-mining, and, not having performed any manual labour for some time, my hands were soft. Every new chum had to undergo the purgatorial experience of having his palms blistered and reblistered until continued contact with the handles of pick and shovel made them horny. However, I soon matriculated at the sluice-box, and was able to do a fair day's work. Then, as my friends could not afford to pay wages—they were, for the time, off the “lead”—I sought another employer. Work was easily found. The uniform rate of wages for Europeans was an ounce of gold per week, the value thereof being about £3 12s. 6d.

With my first earnings I bought some double-width unbleached calico and a palm and needle. By means of these I made myself a small tent. The cost of the material was about seventeen shillings, and the work was easily finished in the course of four or five evenings. I had not been living in this tent for more than ten days when a man, who was about to start on a prospecting trip, bought it over my head for £1 15s. I must have made, and sold at a profit, quite a dozen tents during my stay at Pilgrim's Rest. In fact I soon got to be known as “that chap who always has a tent to sell.” When a purchaser

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came along I would deliver the tent at once, and move my few belongings to the dwelling of some friend or another who happened to have room to spare.

I lived very sparingly indeed; two shillings *per diem* paid for my food and tobacco. I hoarded every penny like a miser. I longed to prospect, to explore; but before attempting this it was necessary to have a few pounds in hand. On Sundays it was my habit to walk to the top of the "Divide"—the backbone of the mountain range. On one side of it lay Pilgrim's Rest, on the other "Mac Mac"—another mining-camp—so called on account of most of the diggers there in the first instance having been Scotsmen. From this lofty coign I could occasionally get far and faint glimpses of the mysterious "Low Country," which was just visible (in clear weather) over the intervening precipice-edged plateau which lay beyond the Mac Mac and Waterfall Creeks.

Sixty miles away to the north-east, but clearly visible in the rarefied mountain air, towered the mighty gates through which the Olifant River roared down to meet the Letaba. On their left the great ranges rolled away to the infinite north-west. What direction first to explore in? That

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was a difficult question to decide, seeing that the field for adventure was equally enticing in every direction.

Beyond the deep valley in which Mac Mac nestled arose gradually a great, shelving tract. In rough outline it resembled a plateau, but the explorer found it to be much broken up and intersected by ravines, some of which were impassable for miles of their length. This plateau was very extensive ; in fact, it stretched indefinitely to the north-east, the only break in that direction being the distant gates of the Oliphant. But on the south-east it ended in an enormous precipice, occasionally several thousand feet in sheer height.

The view from the edge of this precipice was marvellous. From the lower margin of the mighty wall the broken hills, covered with virgin forest, fell away with lessening steepness to the plains. These, also, were covered with trees ; here, however, the woodland had a different character, for there was little or no undergrowth. The plains stretched away to an immense distance. It was in this tract, far below the gazer on the cliff-edge, that romance dwelt in the tents of enchantment. Over it roamed the buffalo, the koodoo, and the giraffe. In the dark

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hour just before dawn the dew-laden boughs shrouding it trembled to the thunder-tones of the lion as he roared over his kill. Above all, its thickets of mystery had hardly been trodden by the foot of civilized man.

Even on the plateau itself large game was occasionally to be found. Some lion, more enterprising than his fellows, would lead his mate and her brood up one of the dizzy clefts in the precipice to prey on the cattle which, in seasons of drought, the Lydenburg farmers occasionally sent here for the sake of the rich pasturage.

One morning, when brewing a billy of tea in a small rocky basin, I heard the sound of trampling. Looking round I saw nine elands descending the side of the depression and making straight for me. They came to within about eighty yards and then stood. The leader was an immense bull—by far the largest I have ever seen. All looked as sleek and fat as stall-fed cattle. My only weapon was an old Colt revolver. How I cursed my bad luck in not having a rifle. After gazing at me for a few seconds the elands galloped on, changing their course slightly to the right. They passed within less than fifty yards of my fire.

CHAPTER VII

Extended rambles—View from the mountain-top—An unknown land—The deadly fever—Gray's fate—Lack of nursing—Temperature rises after death—Pilgrim's Rest in the early days—The prison—The stocks—No colour line—John Cameron in trouble—The Creek "lead"—Plenty of gold—Wild peaches—Massacres of natives in old days—Kameel—His expressions—Life on the Creek—Major Macdonald—The parson—Boulders—Bad accidents—A quaint signboard—"Reefing Charlie."

As the days lengthened out I began to extend the scope of my weekly rambles. Instead of starting on Sunday I would do so on Saturday afternoon, as soon as work in the claim had ceased. Four hours stiff walking would take me over the Divide, and almost across the plateau beyond the Mac Mac River. At some suitable spot I would camp for the night. Next morning's dawn would find me on my way to the edge of the beetling cliff. However, sunrise was rarely a striking spectacle from there, for the reason that usually, —and more especially in the morning—the Low Country was shrouded in haze. It was later,

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when the sun had climbed high and the haze had somewhat dissipated, that the prospect grew most enthralling. But haze, although its density varied considerably from time to time, was rarely absent from the regions lying eastward.

This almost continuous barrier to very distant vision used to annoy me considerably, for my eyes strove greedily to gather up details of the most remote tracts within their range. Once, on an unusually clear day, I caught sight of the Lebomba—about eighty miles away. The very name of this then-mysterious region used to thrill me with romance. How I longed to explore its heights—which, after all, turned out not to be so very high—and to plunge into its seaward hollows. How I girded at the vapour that almost continually shrouded it. But I am now inclined to believe that the glamour which made the prospect seen from the cliff-edge so rich, was largely due to the diaphanous impediment to complete vision. This, by hiding or allowing only a bare hint of the details, gave full play to the imagination.

It must be borne in mind that in the early seventies the vast stretch of country below the mountain range was practically an unknown land. No map of it existed; its geography was but

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vaguely rumoured of. We knew that great rivers—the Crocodile and the Komati, the Olifant, the Letaba, and the lordly Limpopo, in whose depths Leviathan and Behemoth wallowed—flowed through its enchanted pastures, and that wild game—of infinite variety and plentiful beyond the desire of the keenest hunter—nightly slaked their thirst at these mysterious streams.

And yet for more than half of the year that dream-like and translucent haze which spread like a pearl-tinted veil over the romance-filled woodland tract, was a veritable shadow of death. In the earlier days men bent on sport, on prospecting or on adventure, pure and simple, climbed light-heartedly down the steep mountain stairs at all times and seasons—little recking that it would have saved them much needless misery, if they had, instead, leaped headlong from the towering cliffs. For from November to May fever stalked abroad over the plains and among the foothills, seeking human prey, and hardly any who ventured during these months into the dominion of the fever king escaped his blighting grip. The few who managed to save their lives were doomed to months—or even years—of misery.

This could only be learnt by bitter experience.

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In the autumn of 1873, five and thirty men descended to the Low Country ; of these I think twenty-seven died. During the following year we took warning, and none, with the exception of the Alexandre party, attempted exploration before June. Consequently, there were not, so far as I remember, any fatalities ; from June to October the Low Country was healthy enough. But the memory of other people's experience fades quickly ; in 1875 some of us again undertook the trip too early. Six started, one of these happened to be my "mate," who did not go down as far as the others, and so escaped.. The others were Thomas Shires, Meek, Schwiegardt, McKinnon, and myself. I started on the 5th of April, at least two months too early, the others about the same time. Of the five the three first-mentioned died where they took the infection. McKinnon and I managed to get back ; we reached Mac Mac on the same day, as it happened, travelling by different paths. Poor McKinnon, who was of robust, powerful physique, died about a month afterwards. I, whose build was extremely light, had a comparatively mild attack, but I felt its effect for years. Of the men who recovered, the great majority were of the lean kind. It was, in fact, proverbial that

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the less flesh one had on one's bones, the better were the chances of recovery.

One extremely sad case was that of a man named Gray, whom I knew well. He went down with fever at the poisonous Mattol Marsh, about thirty miles from Delagoa Bay, in 1873. His mate went on to Lourenço Marques to get supplies and hire bearers, leaving the sick man alone in a small tent, with a limited supply of food and water. The mate got drunk and remained so whilst the money he had with him lasted, a period of about ten days. Then first he be-thought him of Gray. Assistance was sent, but it arrived too late; Gray was dead of thirst and starvation. I found his grave the following year. Some pitiful Christian had made a rough cross by tying two boughs together, and had stuck it into the sand at the head. What made Gray's case sadder, if possible, was the circumstance that letters were even then awaiting him at Lourenço Marques with the news that he had inherited a fortune.

There can be no doubt that the heavy mortality among those who returned to camp ill with fever was due to the fact that no medical man was available—that is, in the early days—and that we knew nothing whatever of the principles of

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nursing. One instance I recall illustrates this very forcibly. A man had been ill with fever for upwards of two months. The case was a bad one, but at length the patient appeared to rally. One night he sat up in bed and announced that he had completely recovered and was extremely hungry. On being asked what he would like to eat he begged for bread and sardines. These were immediately provided, the bread being coarse and brown. He ate with avidity, and every one present felt the greatest satisfaction. Within a few hours he was dead.

One weird circumstance connected with these fatalities was this: in some instances the temperature of the bodies would rise after death and continue to rise for several hours. This, I have been told, was due to the fever ferment in the blood and tissues developing unchecked, and its products setting up strong chemical action. It was hard, in these instances, to believe that death had actually taken place, so attempts at resuscitation used to be resorted to. I was afterwards told by a medical man from Barberton that a similar phenomenon was noticed there in fever cases—the temperature sometimes rising after death to 110 degrees Fahr.

Pilgrim's Rest, during the first few years after

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gold had been discovered there, was an interesting and delightful place. Those whose experience of mining camps is limited to ones in which the syndicate or the company holds sway, can form no idea of the life of a community where the individual digger is dominant. I am prepared to maintain that life was healthier, saner, and on the whole more generally satisfactory at Pilgrim's Rest in the early seventies than it is in any South African community to-day. There was, of course, the inevitable percentage of loafers, idlers, and scoundrels, but these were kept in their proper place. Public opinion was a very effective force; in matters affecting the general welfare of the community, opinion quickly translated itself into action when the occasion demanded it. Thus the blackguards knew perfectly well that if official justice occasionally halted, its unofficial equivalent was apt to be short, sharp, and decisive in its operation.

The prison was a bell-tent containing two sets of stocks. Under ordinary circumstances a prisoner was accommodated by having both his legs secured. However, occasionally, when an unusually large number of culprits were run in, they had to be content with only one wooden anklet apiece. No colour line was drawn, ex-

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cept, to a certain extent, in the matter of the application of the "cat." Natives and coloured men were flogged for whatever offence they happened to be found guilty of. Europeans were fined, with the alternative of imprisonment, except in the case of a serious offence such as tent-robbing, for instance. For such a crime, an almost unpardonable one in a scattered mining camp, where tents had very often to be left unprotected—the white man got his five and twenty as a matter of course. I only knew of one case of tent-robbing by a native. This was in the early days. The culprit was shot on the spot and thrown down a disused shaft. No questions on the subject were asked.

I will illustrate what I mean by saying that no colour line was drawn. I once had a mate, John Cameron, a Highlander from Skye. John usually became inebriated on Saturday night, but would turn up very early on Sunday morning. One such morning he did not appear. While I was at breakfast a passing digger told me that my mate was in gaol for assaulting a policeman.

I started off to see what could be done. The gaol was about four miles from where I lived. I arrived there in due course. There was no one to prevent my entering, for the prisoners

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were secured so well in the heavy, iron-bound stocks that escape was an impossibility. I found poor John secured by one foot and lying on the ground between two similarly secured Kaffirs. He was in a horrid condition, as, being a powerful man, it had been found necessary to stun him with a club before his arrest could be effected.

It was a fortunate circumstance that I knew Major Macdonald, the Gold Commissioner, fairly well, and that he was—owing to a successful game of poker the previous night—in an unusually good temper. He pencilled an order for John's release. After some difficulty I found the gaoler and got him—although with a bad grace, for John had acted in a really outrageous manner—to obey the order.

All nationalities were represented among the diggers, but English South Africans predominated. Soon, however, an increasing population of Australian, New Zealand, and Californian miners poured in. The "field" was a rich one. The "lead," which zigzagged perplexingly down between the valley terraces, carried plenty of gold. It was, of course, uneven—some parts of it being much richer than others—but I do not think that there was any portion of the lead which it did not pay to work. But the lead

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and the bed of the creek in which the water actually ran zigzagged quite independently of each other. That is to say, at the time when the gold was carried down and distributed by water along the bottom of the valley countless ages ago, the stream then flowing—although it followed the same general direction—took in detail a course quite different from the one it followed when the busy gold-seekers defaced its banks in the days I write of.

Much more gold was found than is generally supposed. I remember four very quiet, reticent men who worked out three and a half rather shallow claims just in front of what was known as the Middle Camp. They never spoke of what they were finding—and it would have been a most serious breach of local etiquette to make any inquiry upon such a subject—but upon leaving they authorized the manager of the bank to make public the fact that they had divided, on dissolution of the partnership, gold to the value of £35,000. Many others also did well, but none to the same extent as the partnership referred to. Some very large nuggets were found. I personally handled one which weighed 10 lb. It was unearthed by the late John Barrington, afterwards of Knysna.

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The wild peaches which grew so plentifully in the vicinity of the Blyde River Valley were a godsend to indigent "Pilgrims." How the trees originated is a mystery. But there they were, on the "flats" of Pilgrim's Creek, along the Blyde River terraces and in many of the surrounding valleys—groves of trees bearing luscious peaches of the yellow clingstone variety. Although the trees were ungrafted, unpruned, and, in fact, had not been interfered with by meddling man since the germination of the stones that gave them auspicious birth, the size and flavour of the fruit were all that could be desired.

One gold-bearing creek was called "Peach Tree" on account of the number of trees there growing. Near the upper end of the worked portion of Pilgrim's Creek was a dense orchard that bore splendidly. But, alas! they grew over "pay dirt," and in consequence were ruthlessly uprooted. I am positive that the occurrence of these trees was quite adventitious; they did not appear to have been planted with any regard to order, nor as a rule were they found in localities suitable for homesteads.

I have often speculated as to the origin of these peach-trees. Did some thoughtful old voor-trekker carry peach-stones in his pocket, and,

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as Admiral Rodney, was wont to do with acorns, plant them here and there for the benefit of posterity? Or did some small boy voortrekker, munching, from the pocket of his blesbuck-skin jacket, dried fruit sent up by some kind *tante* from the far south, carelessly throw aside a stone which had been accidentally included, and was that the ancestor of those trees which used to afford us so many delightful feasts?

About half a century before the days I write of, the then thickly populated region surrounding these goldfields was turned into a shambles and a solitude by the horde of the terrible Ma 'Ntatisi, chieftainess of the Bathlokua. This tribe was driven from its territory, at and around the sources of the Vaal River by the Amahlubi, at the beginning of the upheaval caused by Tshaka, the Zulu king. On many a level mountain terrace can still be seen the circular stone walls indicating where populous villages once stood. Many clans, some large and some small, had inhabited the fertile valleys of the Drakensberg between what is now Wakkerstroom and the Olifant River. They lived in comparative peace with one another. Occasional tribal fights took place, but the victors never attempted to ruin the vanquished or to take their territory.

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Ma 'Ntatisi's horde literally obliterated these communities. Probably the number of people who escaped the slaughter did not amount to five per cent. of the whole.

Old "Kameel" was one of the survivors. He was a native who, with his family, and a few goats, lived at a kraal on a ledge to the right of the creek, about half a mile above the Lower Camp.

Kameel showed me the cave, overlooking the Blyde River Valley, in which he and his mother had hidden themselves while spear and firebrand were erasing his tribe from the face of the surrounding country. This cave could only be entered by climbing up the trunk of a white ironwood-tree and stepping on to a ledge from one of its branches. Other fugitives, Kameel told me, sought the hiding-place during the night, but his mother, fearing that their tracks would be followed, escaped with her children to another refuge during the darkness. It was fortunate that they did this, for the spoilers found the tracks leading to the cavern and massacred every soul it contained. Probably, to-day, it still conceals the gruesome pile of bones—principally of women and children—which I saw in it in 1874.

Kameel was a character in his way. He had

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spent his life—a law unto himself and his family—on the little ledge where the kraal he inhabited stood. Being, in spite of his years, a strong active man and a skilled hunter, Kameel was in great demand among those who, like myself, endeavoured to combine sport with prospecting on their trips. He accompanied me on several of the longer expeditions which I undertook.

Through listening to the conversation of his employers, whose language was apt to be “painful and frequent and free” on slight provocation, Kameel had picked up some stock expressions which were very amusing. I cannot, unfortunately, bowdlerize the best of these without spoiling them, so I will endeavour to give a few examples of the less forceful. If, for instance, Kameel wanted to indicate size, importance, force, or greatness as an attribute of anything whatever—from a flash of lightning to a hippopotamus or an attack of fever—he would say “Helovabigwaan,” using that term as an adjective. To express disapproval or disgust, he would exclaim “Toodamaach,” and shake his head emphatically. The first time I heard the latter expression was when, after a long, painful, and really clever stalk against a heavy wind, I missed a splendid koodoo bull at a distance of

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about ten yards. The miss was due to a bad cartridge fired from an unspeakable rifle, but Kameel held it to be my fault and despised me accordingly.

It was a quaint little cosmos, this community of gold-seekers—in one form or another—whose tents made white the broken slopes of the winding Pilgrim's Valley. We were exceedingly unconventional in most respects, but the essential decencies of life were observed among us as well as they were in any other community of which I have been a member. As time went on many of the diggers brought their families to the creek. I can remember several pretty girls whose dwellings were so many shrines for respectful worship. A disrespectful word towards a woman would have entailed serious consequences to the user. One lady, a Miss Russell, worked a claim very successfully. She eventually married the owner of the claim adjoining hers—a Mr. Cameron. He, if memory does not play me false, represented Pilgrim's Rest in the Transvaal Volksraad. There were no franchise troubles in those days.

As memory dwells on this period, the people with whom I foregathered become very real and very human. I suppose that, in the natural order of things, most of my fellow-pilgrims have

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reached the end of their pilgrimage. Those mighty limbs and strong thews which held crow-bar and pick to be mere playthings, are dust ; those feet which scaled, untired, the highest and steepest ranges are at rest for ever. Yet my recollection of these people is as clear as though it were yesterday, and not five and thirty years ago when I saw them last.

The head of the community was the Gold Commissioner, Major Macdonald. He was at once fountain of justice, dispenser of such patronage as existed, and collector of taxes. "Mac" was an American, and had fought in the War of Secession on the Confederate side. He was not an ideal administrator, but his hands were clean, and he would always do one a good turn if it lay in his power. A tall, thin man with a stooping figure, a goatee beard and iron-grey ringlets showing under the brim of his slouch hat, Major Macdonald's appearance exactly suggested the conventional Yankee of the period of Sam Slick. He played a good game of poker, and was never, so far as I know, seen without a cigar in his mouth. I believe he died a few years since at Uitenhage, where he held the railway cartage contract.

There were several ministers of religion on

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the creek, but it is nevertheless to be feared that we were a rather irreligious lot. All old Pilgrims will remember the Rev. G—— B——, whose church stood in the lower left-hand corner of the Market Square. Mr. B—— belonged to the Church of England, and was, for those comparatively unenlightened days, an advanced ritualist. He furnished his church with those symbols which used to fill all good Protestants with horror, but to which they have recently become more or less accustomed. In the matter of vestments and altar observances he flew absolutely in the face of the Court of Arches.

Mr. B—— was a gentleman and a good fellow, but was sadly weak in the matter of drink. This weakness was a source of general amusement, in fact, it rather tended to increase the parson's popularity with the diggers. Whenever he went up the creek on pastoral visitation bent, every one would be on the *qui vive*, and as he returned men would lie in wait for him with proffers of alcoholic refreshment. By the time he reached home Mr. B—— would be more or less intoxicated, and several of the perpetrators of this sorry conspiracy would assist him to bed.

However, I must try and avoid the tendency to set down a mere catalogue of abnormal



From the "Illustrated London News," July 3, 1875]

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human specimens; I had rather ramble with the reader through the now shadowy thickets of a vivid and virile past, following a payable memory "lead," and examining such nuggets of interesting experience as we may pick up on the way. For the period I write of has passed, leaving scarcely a recognizable sign. The individual digger, the hardy, hearty, independent man who took toll of the riches of the earth by the might of his own arm and for his own proper benefit without intermediary—has gone for ever, and the soulless corporation, the boomster, and the politician have taken his place. I, for one, think that South Africa is poorer for the change.

Pilgrim's Creek was not what is known as "a poor man's diggings." Here and there, especially on the terraces or beds of wash lying above the water flow, lay a few claims which were comparatively easy to work. But most of the alluvium in and about the bed of the creek ran deep, often from ten to twenty feet. The most serious difficulties were presented by the boulders, which were thickly distributed through the wash. It would, indeed, be more correct to say that the wash was sparsely distributed between the boulders.

Any stone which could not be lifted out by

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two men without tackle came within the definition of a boulder. Thirty, or even forty, tons was no very unusual weight for these blocks of smooth, water-worn quartzite. Every one, no matter how large, had to be shifted, the reason being that whatever gold there was lay on the bedrock, and thus beneath all the wash. The bedrock was granite, but was so decomposed and friable that one could dig it out like so much cheese.

One way of getting rid of a mammoth boulder was by excavating a pit in the bedrock, sending the stuff dug out away, through the sluice-box, and then rolling the monster into the excavation. But this was always dangerous work; the pit had to be sunk close to the boulder one wanted to bury, and the latter was apt to break down the soft edge and roll in, smashing the workers into jelly. Some terrible accidents of this kind took place.

The lack of a surgeon occasioned the loss of many a good life and limb, for accidents were frequent. There was an unqualified practitioner in the Lower Camp. His signboard, mounted on a pole outside his tent, bore the legend:—

“J—— A——,
“Surgeon, Barber, and Tentmaker.”

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Despite his quaint advertisement, which carried a suggestion of the Middle Ages, A— was no quack. He was, I think, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and had undergone a certain amount of medical training. He saved many a life—perhaps mine included, for he pulled me through my bout of fever. But several of his serious operations went wrong. This may have been due to lack of proper appliances, and to our rough but by no means ready methods of nursing. I remember the case of a friend of mine whose leg got horribly crushed at Waterfall Creek and had to be amputated. Mortification set in and he died.

One of my mates was the celebrated Charlie Durnan. "Reefing Charlie" was the name he was usually known by. He was a most active and occasionally a successful prospector. It was he, I fancy, who years afterwards discovered the Pigg's Peak Mine in Swaziland. Charlie's weakness was drink. He and I ate the mealie-meal porridge of poverty among the Blyde River terraces for a couple of months. During this time we never earned enough to pay for the salt which seasoned our insipid repasts.

CHAPTER VIII

Work on "The Reef"—Shaft-sinking in a swamp—Wolff and McGrath—A case of snake-bite—Tunnelling—Humping green timber—John Mulcahy—His Gargantuan breakfast—His peculiar habits—His end—The rush to "The Reef"—Cunningham's lead—My bad luck—Peter and his appetite—Mr William Bogis—Fabayne, the cave-dweller—A bellicose bridegroom—Knox and his revolver practice—A senseless toast and its sequel—A terrible accident—Alick Dempster and the *Police News*.

IN 1874 a certain corporation, I think it was called "The Gold Fields Exploration Company," had an office at Pilgrim's Rest. Edward Simpson, formerly of Port Elizabeth, was the manager. Simpson died at Pretoria about fifteen years ago. He was a good friend to me, but was, unwittingly, the occasion of my failing to make a very rich "strike." The company was carrying on prospecting operations in the vicinity of a high saddle on one of the subsidiary ranges north of the Mac Mac Divide. I was engaged at the usual remuneration of an ounce of gold per week, and instructed to join two men, Wolff and McGrath, who were already on the spot.

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The scene of our work was called "The Reef."* No reef had been discovered there, but it was believed that one existed. The saddle was steep and narrow, especially on the northern side, where the rocky gully that scored its flank fell into a more or less swampy basin. Our first work was the sinking of a shaft in this swamp. Several nuggets had been found in the interstices of the bedrock in the gully, so it was believed that the basin contained a rich deposit.

One nugget which I found was the most beautiful thing of the kind I have ever seen. It was shaped like a curved ostrich feather, and was as bright as though it had just been turned out of a jeweller's shop. Simpson had this nugget mounted as a brooch for the lady to whom he was engaged to be married.

The sinking of the shaft was both difficult and dangerous. We struck water at about six feet, and then had to make frames from green timber cut in the vicinity and sink them, backed by slabs, as we took the shaft down. The water flow was very strong, so we had to bale continuously, night and day, for we dared not let it rise. We worked in four-hour shifts, with

* Years afterwards known as the Jubilee Mine.

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relays of native labourers. After sinking sixty feet, and nearly losing our lives in trying to save the shaft from buckling, the water drove us out and the work had to be abandoned. I still believe that there is gold, and plenty of it, at the bottom of that swamp.

Wolff was a Dane of gigantic thews. He had been a sailor. McGrath was an Australian gold-digger. One night the latter stepped barefoot out of the tent and was bitten on the instep by a snake. He collapsed almost immediately. We sent a runner down to the Lower Camp, which was nearly six miles away, for assistance. There was no qualified medical practitioner to be had; however, an amateur came up and treated the patient with strychnine. We had, in the meantime, scarified the injured part and applied ligatures above it. McGrath escaped with his life, but the greater portion of his instep rotted away, and he became a physical wreck. For a time he completely lost the use of the muscles of his eyelids; for months he had to use his hands when he wanted to open or shut his eyes.

After abandoning the shaft, Wolff and I were instructed to drive a tunnel into the hillside on the southern fall of the saddle. We took this work under contract, at so much per foot. The

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driving involved the use of props and slabs ; these had to be cut and trimmed in a forest situated more than a mile away, beyond a deep valley on the northern face.

South African timber is notoriously close-grained and heavy ; consequently the humping of those green balks through the valley and over the saddle to the tunnel was almost the heaviest and most painful work I have ever perspired under. Felling the trees and dressing the timber was child's play compared to it.

One day while engaged in felling I had an adventure with a mamba. Wolff and I were working in a steep-sided gully which contained small, isolated patches of timber ; he was felling a tree about fifty yards above me. It crashed down, its crown striking a patch of scrub. Out of this a large mamba glided and came down the gully, straight for me. I could not climb out, so I made myself as small as possible against the gully-side. The snake passed within a few feet of me, but made no attempt to attack.

Snakes and leopards were very plentiful about our camp. A large python dwelt in a krantz within less than a hundred yards of our tent. The creature was often seen, but it always escaped when we ran over with our guns on receiving a

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report that it was sunning itself. The trees were covered with the claw-marks of leopards.

Before very long a few diggers came and prospected in the vicinity of the saddle for surface gold. Among them was one of the strangest characters I have ever met. His name was John Mulcahy. Originally from my own county, Tipperary, he had gone to California in the early days of the "placer" mines. He and Bret Harte had been mates. Mulcahy had prospected far and wide among the Rocky Mountains, and had even crossed the Yukon River on one of his trips.

Solitary in his habits and possessed of a most violent temper, Mulcahy was usually disliked by those with whom he came in contact. But he attracted me very strongly. Aged, I should say, about forty-five — yellow-bearded, exceedingly handsome, strong, and tall—there was, nevertheless, a suggestion of something sinister about him. To me he unbent considerably when we were alone.

Once in a burst of confidence Mulcahy told me that he had left California to escape the attentions of a certain widow, the proprietess of a saloon, who had fallen in love with him. He related how she had pursued him to a remote

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camp, burst into his tent one morning and, before he could resist, thrown her arms around his neck, and given him a kiss "you might have wathered a mule at."

Mulcahy and I first met at the Rotunda Creek Rush, and when that abode of "wild cat" collapsed, we arranged to take a prospecting trip towards the Olifant River. We made a start, but after a week were driven back by some of the worst weather I have ever experienced. The climax came when we were caught one afternoon on a high mountain plateau by a succession of violent hailstorms. We crept under the lee of a rock for shelter, but our fire was smashed out over and over again by hurtling masses of ice, so we shivered in darkness through what seemed to be an interminable night.

As the weather remained unsettled, we decided to return to camp and there refit. Besides, we badly needed recuperation after the more than ordinary hardships we had undergone. We arrived at the Lower Camp one morning at about nine o'clock, more than half-starved. I shall never forget my wolfish sensations as we flung down our swags at Stopforth and Bowman's eating-house and called for breakfast. I then enjoyed the heartiest meal of my life, after which

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I sat back pulling at my pipe and noting with astonishment the amount of food which Mulcahy consumed.

I thought he would never stop; plateful followed plateful in an apparently endless endeavour to sate the insatiable. However, all things must come to an end; so, eventually, did Mulcahy's Gargantuan meal. As he paid the prescribed fee of two shillings, I thought Stopforth looked pensive.

After resting for some ten days, and the weather having in the meantime cleared, we made another start. We had decided to commence our journey after a good meal, so struck our tent early one morning at the Upper Creek, and tramped down to the Lower Camp, once more to bestow the doubtful favour of our custom upon Stopforth and Bowman.

We put down our swags at the door and entered. It was barely eight o'clock, so no other customers had arrived. The eating-house was a large marquee tent, with rough tables and benches on either side of a passage down the middle. At the end of this passage a square piece had been cut out of the canvas, and it was through the resulting aperture that plates were passed to and from the kitchen. Bowman

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it was who presided over the cooking while Stopforth did the waiting.

We took our seats at one of the tables and called for breakfast. Stopforth stood for a few seconds and regarded Mulcahy with a sombre eye. Then he strolled slowly down the passage and called through the aperture—

“ Bill.”

“ Hullo? ”

“ Breakfast for ten ; here’s this son of a —— back.”

My partner was enormously pleased at this compliment to his prowess ; for months afterwards he used to chuckle at the remembrance of it.

After Mulcahy moved up to “The Reef” he kept more than ever to himself, discouraging advances even from me. This, we afterwards found, was due to his having struck rich gold from the very first, and to his desire to keep the circumstance from being known. He worked his cradle at a small spring about a hundred and fifty yards away. To this spring he had scarped a footpath along the mountain-side, and over this footpath he barrowed his stuff. He seemed seldom or never to sleep. It was his custom to knock off work comparatively early in the

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afternoon. Until about nine o'clock he would stroll about. Then he would recommence work, and we would often hear the barrow going all night long. Most of the daytime he spent cradling at the spring.

Occasionally, in the evening, this strange being would come and stand near our tent. Wolff, who hated him, strongly objected to this; he thought the man came to listen to our conversation. My theory, which I fully believe to have been the right one, was that the lonely creature sometimes felt an irresistible longing for human companionship.

The belief currently held regarding Mulcahy was to the effect that he had been a noted "road agent"—that is to say, a highway robber—in California. One incident, of which I was a witness, might be taken to indicate that at least he had something very heavy on his conscience.

One evening Wolff and I were watching the approach of a very violent thunderstorm. Just as it broke, and while we were in the act of fastening the tent-door, Mulcahy appeared and, to my surprise, asked if he might come in. Wolff gave no answer, but I replied in the affirmative. Mulcahy entered, and the three of us sat down, Wolff and I on one bunk and the visitor on the other. The table was between the bunks.

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Our tent had what is known as a "fly"; that is to say, a second roof pitched about six inches above the ordinary one. The rain came down in torrents and the wind blew with great violence. The inner roof remained dry, except where the outer one flapped against it. This contact happened just over where Mulcahy was sitting, and occasioned a wet mark resembling, in rough outline, the head, shoulders, and outstretched arms of a human being. The mark was fully visible to Wolff and me, but could not be seen by Mulcahy, although the canvas on which it appeared sloped immediately over him.

Wolff, who was a big, heavy man, very slow of speech, said in his halting, broken English—

"Mulcahy, dere is de ghost of dat last man you shot in California."

Mulcahy turned, shot a glance back towards where Wolff's eyes were directed, and fell forward on the table. When he lifted his face it was drawn and the colour of ashes, his eyes were full of horror. It was a terribly dramatic scene.

Shortly after this Mulcahy took a partner, a man named Friese. They found a great deal of gold.

The last time I saw Mulcahy was in 1876, at East London. I was then working on a surf-

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boat, and in passing under the stern of a steamer, the anchor of which was being weighed, I noticed a yellow-bearded man leaning over the rail. His face was not turned towards me ; nevertheless, I felt I could hardly be mistaken as to his identity. I called out his name ; he turned, and I saw that it was Mulcahy, right enough. He recognized me at once, and apparently was delighted to see me. We conversed for a short while, but my boat was soon worked away on the warp, out of earshot. I afterwards heard that Mulcahy had taken several thousand pounds sterling with him to Cape Town, and that there he purchased a liquor-shop in a low quarter of the city. Shortly afterwards he died insane.

The tunnel at the saddle having to be abandoned on account of our striking a mass of loose rock through which it was impossible to drive without more expensive appliances than we possessed, Wolff left the service of the company. I was anxious to leave too, because alluvial gold had been struck in rich patches on and near the saddle. But Simpson made a point of my remaining for a few weeks longer in his employ, for the sake of protecting the company's supposed interests.

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I wished to peg out, on my own account, the site where my tent stood, but this I could not do so long as the claims of the company were held in my name. On the very day the company suspended operations all the vacant ground on and about the saddle was pegged out. Most of those who "rushed" the vicinity were New Zealanders from Hokitika. The site on which my tent stood was appropriated by a man named Cunningham. When ground was required for mining purposes, any one tenting on it had to remove.

Within five minutes of Cunningham's first pick-stroke, he struck the "lead." On merely turning over the surface sods the nuggets could be picked out like plums from a cake. The bed-rock was soft soapy shale ; there was no "wash" in the ordinary sense of the term. Loam, with which small, angular fragments of quartz were mixed, covered the bedrock to a depth of about six inches. But this bedrock turned out to be scored by a small gutter or channel a few inches deep and about eighteen inches wide, which ran for about twenty feet through the middle of the claim. The surface soil gave no indication of the existence of the channel.

The bottom of this channel was literally paved

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with nuggets. The stuff it contained gave an average of over four ounces to the pan ; it had to be barrowed to Mulcahy's spring, there to be cradled. Within a few weeks the claim was worked out, for there was no gold to be found outside the channel. But the gold won by Cunningham was worth over £4,000. The legs of my bunk had actually been sunk in the richest part of the ground, they must have literally been touching some of the nuggets. This was but one of the several occasions upon which I all but grasped the skirts of Fortune.

Soon a water-race was brought in from the opposite side of the valley, on the southern slope of the saddle—a distance of about four miles. Then ground-sluicing operations began. I again took service, this time with a party of New Zealanders. I never knew how much gold was found by them, but the amount must have been considerable. I was not permitted to be present at any “wash up,” but in the stages just previous to that climax I used to see nuggets lying thickly about whenever the water cleared. No one—even though he were one of the partners—was allowed to pick up gold before the end of the “wash up,” all had to come into the pan.

My best friend among these men was a gigantic

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Swede who was called Peter. He had another name, but, as he said himself, it would be necessary to take a pinch of snuff before you could pronounce it properly. Ordinarily the most good-natured of men, Peter became an elemental savage when hungry. If then spoken to his only reply would be a snarl—quite likely to be followed by a blow. However, as Peter ate, his normal placidity gradually returned. When fully satisfied he would say—leaning back with a smile and a sigh of satisfaction :—

“Now a little child might play mit me.”

To show how little surnames counted for in those days I will mention a trifling incident: My tent-mate among the New Zealanders went by the name of Bill. One Saturday afternoon I remained at the tent, the other members of the party having gone down to the Lower Camp; a native brought up a parcel containing a blanket and addressed to “Mr. William Bogis.” I sent the boy away, saying that I did not know of any one bearing that name. Next day Bill was swearing at the storekeeper for not having sent up a blanket he had bought. I innocently related what had happened, and then Bill swore at me. “Mr. William Bogis” had been my tent-mate for several weeks and I was unaware of the fact.

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In 1889, when travelling from Kimberley to Johannesburg by coach, I picked up an old newspaper at a wayside hotel. In it was a paragraph giving an account of how a prospector named William Bogis had been blown to pieces in a shaft somewhere in Northern Bechuanaland. I have no doubt this related to my old mate.

A very curious character at Pilgrim's Rest was a man named Fabayne, whose dwelling-place was a cave under a cliff about half-way up the creek on the northern side. Fabayne was well-connected, his father was a Church dignitary,—a dean, I fancy—and was evidently well off; for he allowed the scapegrace son £200 per annum, paid quarterly. Fabayne was a university man and an accomplished scholar, but he had gone the pace at an unusually rapid rate. When I knew him he was a hopeless drunkard.

Whenever Fabayne drew a £50 instalment he would place £45 in the hands of the keeper of a certain bar, and £5 with a butcher whose shop was in the vicinity. He would then get drunk and remain so as long as the £45 lasted. During the continuance of his spree it was his custom to remain on the bar premises night and day, and to stand treat to all and sundry. It was understood that the bar-keeper was to fire him

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out as soon as the deposit became exhausted. This usually happened in about three weeks. He would then return to his cave.

The £5 was meant to keep him in food and clothes until the next instalment fell due. He used to fetch a sheep's pluck every day and make soup of it in a billy. The butcher used his own discretion in the matter of clothes, but when Fabayne grew more than ordinarily ragged I fancy the bar-keeper contributed towards his outfit, a thing he could, under the circumstances, well afford to do.

A complete inventory of the belongings of this strange being would have included a pick, a shovel, a pan, and an old sluice-box, none of which he ever used, also a blanket, a big knife, a billy, and a Greek Testament. The cave, although draughty, was comfortable and fairly dry. Now and then I shared it with Fabayne; generally on those occasions when I sold my tent. He was a charming companion, not alone was he exceedingly well-read, but he was sympathetic and helpful to a degree. I have many a time seasoned my mealie porridge with his pluck soup, and found the seasoning good.

When "getting off" after one of his quarterly sprees, Fabayne's habits were apt to be trying

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to one like myself, without an allowance, and who had to work hard and constantly to keep body and soul together. For instance, he would sometimes sit half the night through, at the mouth of the cave, declaiming Sophocles. I could not understand a word he uttered, but his elocution was good, his voice was well modulated, and the sonorous periods of the choruses from the "Antigone" and the "Elektra" were effective by virtue of their mere sound.

This sort of thing was all very well up to about nine o'clock; after that, however, it became annoying. But it was impossible to stop him. I used to pelt him with fairly heavy stones, and although I must sometimes have hurt him rather severely, he took no notice. Fabayne admitted that he was deliberately drinking himself to death; trying to argue him out of this intention proved to be of not the slightest avail.

I recall a wedding which had a sequel very characteristic of its environment. A certain digger—his name has escaped me, although I knew the man well—married a rather pretty girl. The ceremony took place in a little church that had recently been built near the Middle Camp, and in which the Rev. Mr. B—— used occasionally to officiate. This church stood on a small knoll,

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a straight pathway leading steeply up to it from the creek.

By common consent every one within sight struck work and assembled close to the church for the purpose of giving the bride and bridegroom a cheer on their emerging. I should say that from thirty to forty men lined the pathway on each side. Nearly every one had provided himself with an old boot for the occasion. After the knot had been tied the happy couple passed down the hill between the lines of their cheering friends. Then, at a given signal, we all let fly the boots in a volley—taking care, of course, that neither bride nor bridegroom was hit. Then one man picked up a fairly heavy boot from where it had fallen and deliberately hurled it at the bride, striking her on the back. The perpetrator of this outrage was, needless to say, a discarded suitor.

The bridegroom turned round, took off his coat—which he handed to the bride to hold—and rolled up his sleeves. He knew quite well who had thrown the missile. A ring was at once formed, and the fight began. It only lasted, however, for three rounds. The bridegroom was victorious; he escaped without a scratch. The other man was, as he richly deserved to be,

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severely punished. It was, however, just as well for him that this was the case, otherwise we would have ducked him in the muddiest tail-race within reach. As the victor marched off with his proud mate he received an immense ovation. I regret to have to record the fact that the officiating parson was taken down to Tom Craddock's bar and there made very drunk indeed.

When I camped near the Big Rock on Slater's Claim there lived, on the flat where the creek widened out under Gardiner's Point, an American named Knox. He was a tall, swarthy man of immensely powerful physique. Originally a sailor from, I think, Martha's Vineyard, he had deserted from his ship in the early days of the diamond-fields.

Knox was a quiet, inoffensive man, except when under the influence of drink. Then he was, in local parlance, "a holy terror." He would get a keg of Mauritius rum—a most ferocious intoxicant—open it, fasten up his tent, and go to bed. For several days thereafter Knox would not be dangerous, unless you tripped over the tent-ropes or tried to open the tent. However, he eventually reached a stage during which if he heard footsteps anywhere in his vicinity he

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would fire his revolver in the direction of the sound. The canvas sides of his tent were riddled with bullet-holes, I only remember one case in which damage actually resulted, it was that of a native who got a bullet through the calf of his leg.

After a time people "in the know" avoided the vicinity of Knox's tent whenever he was on the spree. Sometimes, when in the later stages of his cups, Knox would fire in all directions—apparently for the purpose of relieving his feelings. However, as there were no tents very close to his, this did not matter so very much. Many a time have I heard the old Colt revolver barking at intervals through the evening, but the performance was taken quite as a matter of course. One would merely say to another—

"Hullo, there's Knox at it again. I suppose he'll be out to-morrow or the day after."

I remember something which caused much comment early in 1875. I can vouch for the details, so far as I relate them. On Old Year's Night, 1874, three men met at a bar known as "The Half-way House," which stood where the creek narrowed and made a sharp turn a few hundred yards above the Middle Camp. The late John Barrington, afterwards of Knysna, was

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one, another was a man named Marshall, the name of the third I have forgotten.

Just before midnight they drank to a profane and senseless toast: "Before this day twelve-months may we all die in a tail-race and be covered by tailings." "Tailings" are the waste products of the sluice-box—the sand and gravel carried away by the stream of water which flows over the "ripples."

About four months afterwards the man whose name I have forgotten was out prospecting among the higher ranges to the north of the creek. He fell ill and endeavoured to return to camp, but a bitterly cold rain set in and he perished miserably. Soon afterwards Marshall, who had been in the Low Country, went down with fever. The attack was comparatively light, so he soon got better. But one dark night, while still somewhat weak, he went out to visit a friend. Not far from the tent of the latter a "head-race," which is not just the same as a "tail-race," had recently been dug. As the digging had been effected while Marshall was laid up, he was unaware of the existence of the excavation.

The head-race was about eight feet deep; it was wide at the top, but it narrowed down to about a foot's-breadth at the bottom. Into this

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chasm poor Marshall fell headlong, and his shoulders jammed where the channel narrowed. Owing to weakness he was unable to extricate himself, and his head, being downward, damned the water up so that it drowned him. The tent of the friend he had intended to visit stood close by. This man noticed that the flow of the water stopped several times and then went on again with a rush. This was caused by the struggles of the unhappy Marshall as he was drowning.

Nothing happened to John Barrington, whom I met fourteen years afterwards in Cape Town, but in view of the two fatalities he was somewhat uneasy until the following New Year's Day had arrived.

Another terrible accident was the one in which a friend of mine named Blenkins lost his life. I have a very clear recollection of the circumstances. The thing happened on the afternoon of the day on which I returned from the "rush" to Rotunda Creek.

Blenkins was working on the high terrace known as Gardiner's Point. A large quartzite boulder—it was afterwards found to measure nearly thirty tons—stood embedded in the face of the claim, about three feet above bedrock. This boulder had been stripped on one side.

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Many attempts had been made towards causing it to drop forward, with the view of rolling it down the face of the terrace. No one knew, of course, how much of it was still concealed by the yet undisturbed gravel. Poor Blenkins very unadvisedly sat down before it and began loosening the wash underneath with a driving-pick. Suddenly the boulder fell forward and pinned him to the bedrock, from the waist downwards. I was at work in the creek below. I heard a shout and saw men running from every direction up the face of the terrace. I joined the stream. I shall never forget what I saw when I reached the scene of the accident. It was hours before we succeeded in shifting the boulder. We only managed this by excavating a pit in the bedrock and rolling the monster into it. Whilst doing this two other men nearly lost their lives.

My poor friend was alive and conscious all the time. The only mercy was that he did not suffer physically; he was too badly crushed. He died soon after being released. Blenkins was extremely popular. His tent stood within about fifteen yards of mine.

The professional digger of those days was a being *sui generis*. Shrewd, frugal, industrious, and capable of taking care of himself while in

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his accustomed environment, he was apt to become as helpless as a child when he reached unfamiliar surroundings. Thus, a successful digger wishing to invest his "pile" was often the prey of the first specious rogue he met.

Poor Alick Dempster! All old Pilgrims will remember him and the rich little "pocket" he struck close to John Barrington's claim, and just below the "Half-way House." Dempster was a digger of the old school. He disbelieved in banks, so always kept his gold in his tent. Whenever he wished to go anywhere, no matter what the distance, he walked. He preferred nuggets and "dust" to notes or specie; when he made a purchase he liked to weigh out the equivalent of the price across the counter from his chamois leather bag. He usually got drunk on Saturday night, but not to such an extent as to lose his reason.

After his "pocket" had been worked out Dempster decided to revisit his native country, Scotland. So he entertained his friends at a farewell banquet, packed his swag—with 220 ounces of gold carefully secured in the middle—and started on a tramp to D'Urban. A lot of his friends accompanied him to the Blyde River Drift, and there gave him a parting cheer. Even

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now I can see him sturdily walking up the hill after he had crossed the river, and pausing to wave his hat to us in farewell.

Dempster arrived safely in D'Urban and booked his passage to England. But the enforced idleness on the voyage preyed on his mind; the strange surroundings irked him; he took to drink badly. One day, when in the Bay of Biscay, he rushed on deck carrying his leather bag of gold. After flinging this into the sea he leaped overboard. Dempster was fished out; the gold, of course, went to the bottom.

A few months afterwards a striking and realistic picture of poor Alick Dempster's escapade occupied the place of honour in the *Police News*. Little detail was given, what there was resembled a nightmare. Just touching the water and causing a tremendous splash was a conventionally designed gold-bag labelled "£800." In the air, descending from the ship's rail, in what the late Lewis Carroll would have described as an Anglo-Saxon attitude, was a figure purporting to be Alick himself, but it was hardly a recognizable portrait.

This work of sensational art caused great excitement in the camp. There was only one copy, and that was in immense demand—so much



PILGRIM'S REST IN 1897.

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so that the owner found himself suddenly famous. Prompted by a simple desire to be obliging, he pasted the picture on the lid of a packing-case, and printed the legend "This is Alick Dempster" beneath it in large letters. A native was hired to carry the board up and down the creek, beating an old tin billy to attract attention. This thoughtful proceeding was much appreciated. One may wonder as to how it struck the native.

CHAPTER IX

Expedition to Delagoa Bay—A *rencontre* at Constantinople—Morisot and the lion—Game in the Low Country—The Barber encampment—Lions attack by daylight—Lions in the donga—The lion's voice—Ways of the lion—The lion an eater of carrion—Tyrer and the buffalo—Veld fires—A piece of bad luck—The Low Country rivers—Snakes—Hyænas—Lourenço Marques—Funeral of Pat Foote—Discovery of gold near Blyde River—Anticipated affluence—Disappointment.

I AM here met by the difficulty that many of my exploring, hunting, and prospecting adventures during the years 1874 and 1875 have been described in one or other of my published works, either as stated fact or fact disguised as fiction. Nevertheless, I will endeavour to recall a few as yet unrecorded reminiscences of adventure by flood and field during that period.

In June, 1874, I joined an expedition to Delagoa Bay, which was organized by President Burgers for the purpose of convoying ammunition and other war materials to Pretoria. An attack upon Sekukuni, the Baphedi chief, had been decided on. This, however, was not attempted until nearly two years had elapsed. The undertaking

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was a difficult one, and involved some interesting experiences, but as I have already published an account of it under the title of "A Forgotten Expedition," * I cannot deal with the episode here, in detail.

Quite recently I came across a reminiscence of this trip in an unexpected quarter. In his "Recollections" Mr. David Christie Murray relates how, when dining at the Hôtel Misseri, in Constantinople, at the time of the Russo-Turkish War, he witnessed a meeting between a French officer, Captain Tiburce Morisot, and Archibald Campbell—afterwards known as "Schipka" Campbell. These men recognized each other as having met in South Africa, the occasion being a visit of Campbell to Morisot's camp, and the roasting of a giraffe's heart at the camp-fire.

I happened to be present at the occurrence evidently referred to ; the episode took place on the very expedition which I mentioned above. But the detail as given to Mr. Murray is quite wrong. The party was not composed of "Frenchmen cutting a military road," nor was Morisot in charge of it. He was, as a matter of fact, merely one of the gang, the same as I was. We were on convoy duty near the Komati

* In "By Veld and Kopje."

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River. It was a marrow-bone and not the heart that was roasted. I have a very clear recollection of the incident. The skin of the giraffe was the largest I have ever seen; it had been found necessary to cut it in two before it could be removed.

Morisot, by the way, had a startling adventure with a lion. We were camped at the Crocodile River Drift; lions were more plentiful in the neighbourhood than I have ever known them elsewhere; all night long they growled or grunted around our encampment. The river-bank, close to the water, was very sandy, and the spoor on the sand strip, which lay about two hundred yards from the wagons, showed that many lions used to pass to and fro over it every night. It was our habit to light six large fires as soon as the sun went down.

Morisot said he wanted to shoot a lion, so one day he dug a shallow pit in the sand, within about twenty yards of the water. Just before nightfall he took his rifle and went away in the direction of the drift. Nothing happened for a couple of hours; then we heard the sound of approaching footsteps—evidently of some one running—and husky gasps. Shortly afterwards Morisot, minus his rifle and hat, rushed into

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camp. He was in a condition of ghastly terror ; his jaw had dropped, his face was ashen, his eyes were glazed. He tottered to his sleeping-place and crept under the blankets.

Morisot could never be induced to tell us what had happened to him. Next morning, however, we found the spoor of a very large lion at the edge of the pit. My own idea is that Morisot went to sleep and was awakened by the lion growling within a few inches of his face. One could hardly blame him for being demoralized under such circumstances.

Those who nowadays travel by rail through the denuded tract between Delagoa Bay and the Drakensberg can form no idea as to the marvellous richness of animal life on those plains in the early seventies. More especially was this the case in the level wooded area extending from the inland slope of the Lebomba Range to Ship Mountain. Blue wildebeeste and quagga were so plentiful that we seldom wasted ammunition on them. Buffalo abounded, sometimes in very large herds. Waterbuck were always to be found near the rivers. Elephants existed, but were very wild and usually were scarce. Giraffe were numerous, but difficult to approach on foot.

The Komati and the Crocodile were then wide,

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swiftly flowing streams ; in winter their water was crystal-clear. Along their banks the dense, evergreen boskage lay soft and rich as velvet. In these enchanted thickets koodoo, sable, and other beautiful antelopes of the rarer varieties were always to be found. Impala were as numerous in the areas lying along the river-courses as were springbucks on the upland southern plains.

Shooting stories are proverbially as unreliable as fishing ones. I have hitherto avoided relating my own slaying experiences. They do not, I suppose, differ from those of other men who followed big game in the days when rifles had not reached anything like their present pitch of deadly perfection. I think, however, that every old hunter might tell of things he has seen which would be interesting enough if he only could get people to believe them. Personally I could relate some which, although literally true, are so grossly improbable that I candidly confess I would not believe them myself had I not seen them happen.

I will give a specimen of these Munchausen-like anecdotes, just to show the reader how well-advised I have been in suppressing the series. On one occasion, when camped about ten miles

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from Ship Mountain, one of my friends among the Balala * came in to report that a very fine tsessaby bull was to be found in a kloof some four miles away. The meat of the tsessaby is more delicious than that of any other game, so I went forth without delay. My gun was a double-barrelled one, the left barrel taking a Snider cartridge and the right a cartridge with a round bullet, only to be used at close quarters.

Before I had gone five hundred yards from the camp I noticed two very large blue wildebeest bulls on my left. They were not more than two hundred and fifty yards away. According to all precedent they should have decamped at once. Instead of doing this, however, they kept a course more or less parallel to mine. Suddenly, however, they turned and came towards me in a most threatening manner, so much so that my Balala companion climbed into a tree and I laid myself prone behind an ant-hill, covering the leading animal with my rifle. They stood at a distance of about eighty yards. I fired, hitting the leader just where the neck sank into the chest; he fell dead.

The other wildebeest ran away for about fifty

* Landless and weaponless waifs who wander over uninhabited tracts. *Lit.*, "people who are dead."

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yards ; then he wheeled round and stood facing me. Just as I was about to fire he turned and stood broadside on, gazing at the carcase of his mate. I fired, aiming just behind the shoulder. The bullet "klopped" hard. The animal reeled, ran about fifty yards to my right, and once more stood, again broadside on. Again I fired, and once more the bullet "klopped." Then the wildebeest made a swift rush for about sixty yards and collapsed. After falling it lay perfectly still.

I found that my bullets had struck within two inches of each other. I cut the carcase open and found that both bullets had pierced the heart—not alone pierced it, but torn it to literal ribbons of flesh.

The critical reader, especially if he has ever hunted big game, will find that the foregoing tale contains three improbabilities and a manifest impossibility. Although the circumstances happened exactly as related, I do not expect to be believed.

About four miles to the north of our camp, near Ship Mountain, was a *leegte* several miles long and of varying breadth. It was more or less full of reeds ; it also contained several extensive patches of low, dense jungle. This *leegte* was the main refuge for lions which ranged over a large extent of surrounding country ; every

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morning their fresh spoors could be traced to it. But owing to the density of the cover they were seldom seen. On one occasion a hunt was organized by our people acting in conjunction with a party of hunters who were camped about fifteen miles away, and who had lost some oxen through lions, whose spoor had been followed to one of the jungle-patches.

The marauders had been traced to one end of the cover, so we put in some beaters between where we supposed them to be and the rest of the reed-jungle area. The beaters lit a row of small fires along the line they occupied. Eventually a lion broke to the open, like a driven buck, close to where one of the hunters was standing. The latter fired, and hit the lion in the tail.

The effect of the wound was very startling. No longer was the lion a shrinking fugitive, disgusted at having been disturbed before his meal of the previous night had been digested, and only anxious to get to some other hiding-place. Now he was a tornado of fury—with flaming eyes, gleaming teeth, and erect mane. Emitting short, coughing thunder-growls of wrath, he charged straight for the one who had fired the shot.

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The man dropped down his rifle and sprang into the branches of a tree. The latter was too small to afford complete safety. The lion began springing at the demoralized hunter, trying to claw him from his insecure refuge. However, a skilful shot from another member of the party brought the furious brute to the dust. A surprising sequel to the incident was this: the man who had fled up the tree claimed the lion's skin, on the score that he had drawn first blood.

About fifteen miles away from one of our camps was that of the Barbers and Cummings—old Kaffrarian friends of mine. I once walked over to see them. A sort of kraal-fence of horns around their encampment was evidence of the splendid sport they had enjoyed. Mr. Hilton Barber had had a narrow escape a few days previously. When on horseback he had been charged by a wounded buffalo. Mr. Barber was flung off. His horse was killed, but the buffalo fell to a well-directed bullet fired from the fallen rider while the poor horse was still impaled on the cruel horns.

The Barber party had encountered few, if any, lions up to the time of my visit. A few days afterwards, however, a remarkable thing occurred. The encampment being outside the

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tsetse fly area, the party had brought both cattle and horses with them. One day all the hunters were away on horseback. The oxen, in charge of a native herd, were grazing in the immediate vicinity of the wagons. In the middle of the forenoon a troop of lions came up openly and deliberately, and attacked the cattle, killing several. One or two were pulled down on the very edge of the camp. This was an almost unprecedented occurrence.

One very important incident of my visit was the gift to me of a pair of boots by Mr. Hilton Barber. I had, for weeks previously, been using sandals of buffalo-hide, and my feet used to get terribly scarred by thorns. I shall never forget the comfort of that pair of boots.

Our camp, some ten miles to the westward of Ship Mountain, was almost on the edge of a donga, with sheer sides about ten feet deep. At the bottom was a water-hole—the only one within a radius of many miles. On pitch-dark nights the lions would often come up this donga to drink. It was eerie, indeed, to lie in the flimsy tent listening to the growls and gulps of the great brutes within less than ten yards of where we lay. I often tried to muster up courage to light a flare, creep to the edge of the donga, and

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try a shot. By daylight the idea seemed feasible enough, and not very dangerous. But I never got so far as to translate this idea into action. There is, I think, nothing so calculated to imbue one with a sense of personal insignificance as the knowledge, on a dark night, that lions are in one's immediate vicinity.

Leaving the brazen-toned roar, which is but seldom heard, out of the question, the lion's ordinary voice seems to be emitted by some being of incalculable immensity. It resembles a series of deep, half-smothered detonations linked together by querulous gruntle. It is difficult to realize that the sound originates from anything less huge than a mammoth.

Three times only have I heard a lion roar wrathfully. The sound is harsh and shattering, and is pitched in a higher key than that of the growl. To me the growl was far more awe-inspiring than the roar ; it carried a suggestion of stealth combined with latent ferocity and unimaginable force in reserve. The adjective "thunderous" does not fit the roar at all ; the latter suggests, more than anything else, the tones of a mighty, cavernous brass trumpet. Most terrifying, however, is the suspicion that a lion is silently padding round your camp just before

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daybreak, debating with himself as to whether he will or will not attack.

Yes, it was "when the phantom of false morning died" that I always dreaded the lion. Indeed, in the early part of the night, when the awesome voices were audible—often in several directions at once, there was little or no danger. But just before dawn the silence suggested sinister possibilities. An examination of the ground after day had broken would occasionally show that a lion had circled round the camp over and over again, apparently unable to key up his courage to the attacking pitch. But experience shows that the lion sometimes does attack, and when this happens it is almost invariably in the dark interval just before the east begins to pale.

The reason for this is easily discovered if one looks at the thing from the lion's point of view. I am convinced that—leaving out the cases in which a lion is a confirmed man-eater, is wounded, or is cornered—this animal never attacks man unless (1) when it is too old or stiff to catch and pull down game, or (2) when game of every description simultaneously vacates a given area and stampedes to a great distance, a thing which not unfrequently happens.

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Here, then, we have a desperately hungry brute ; he may, possibly, have gone several days without food. He winds a camp of human beings—creatures he knows to be edible but which, I firmly believe, he hates the idea of eating as much as the ordinary man would hate the idea of eating a monkey. But the lion has been prowling all night, has perhaps prowled for a succession of hungry nights, and he knows that day is at hand. Moreover, he knows that at dawn the last chance of his having a meal will have gone.

Accordingly a conflict is set up in his mind. His dislike of human flesh plus that dread of the human species which he shares with the whole brute creation is on the one side, his ravening hunger on the other. Increase the hunger-pressure to a certain pitch, and the lion will attack. I have not forgotten that "The Man-Eaters of Tsavo" used to take their human toll early in the evening, but not alone had they deliberately adopted man-eating, so to say, as a profession, but long impunity had made them careless.

I knew a man who once lay sleeping in a patrol tent near Pretorius Kop on the Delagoa road. The night was chill, so he folded a gunny-bag

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over his feet to keep them warm. In the morning, at the critical time, something seized him by the foot and pulled him out of the tent. He knew at once what had happened, a lion had caught hold of him. Close to where he lay stood a billy half full of cold tea. He grasped this in passing, and, as soon as he was clear of the tent, belaboured the lion over the face with it. The brute dropped him and made off. The man's ankle was slightly bruised, but the skin was not broken. This proved clearly that the lion was an old one with teeth worn down to mere stumps.

The first time I heard a lion roar was when two of them had pulled down a sick ox about a hundred yards from my tent. Another lion approached, and the two in possession roared apparently to warn off the intruder. It was from the spoors, which I examined after day had broken, that I inferred the details. To judge by the tracks the last-comer was a very old animal.

The next occasion was when a donkey, which was tied to a tree within four paces of where I was sitting over a very small fire, was carried off. Two lions sprang on the poor animal simultaneously; they made no sound until they had dragged their prey into the bush, a distance

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of about twenty yards. Then they roared together, their raucous voices mingling in a most peculiar and awe-inspiring duet. Very soon they dragged the carcase to a spot about forty yards farther on, where they ate it. They roared at intervals during the repast—probably as a warning to me not to interfere with them. The third instance happened when a lioness was shot through the spine and thus disabled. Her voice was the most terrible of all.

There are many instances recorded among the natives of lions becoming habitual man-eaters. I have heard of whole communities being broken up by the brutes. It was useless for the unfortunate people to move from one spot to another, as the man-eaters invariably followed them. The Amangwane horde wandered for eight years—mostly over the plains of the Orange Free State—after having been driven out by Tshaka. It was related to me by some of the few survivors of that awful pilgrimage with whom I have foregathered, that for years man-eating lions followed them, taking toll of the unhappy stragglers. After a time this was taken quite as a matter of course.

I have often seen it stated that lions will not eat carrion. This is quite erroneous; I am

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inclined to think that they occasionally prefer meat that is tainted. I have known them gorge at the carcase of an ox which had died of tsetse bite, and which had lain putrefying for several days, when there were sick oxen in the immediate vicinity to be had for the mere trouble of killing.

I was one of those who, in 1874, rescued the fever-stricken Alexandre party from their ghastly camp on the seaward slope of the Lebomba. Of the original eight members, three were dead, and the survivors were so weak and spent that they were unable to do more in the matter of interment than scoop shallow trenches within a few yards of the shelter, lay the bodies of their dead companions therein, and cover them up with sand. Yet these were unearthed several times by lions, which grew so fearless that the firing of a shot would not always scare them away. Once the lions came up and regarded the unfortunate beings in broad daylight, and then, as though they had deliberately made a choice, proceeded to unearth a corpse.

Most of this took place during the absence of the one member of the party who was still able to move about, but as he had to fetch water every day in a demijohn from a spot eight miles

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distant, he was usually away. However, the account of their experiences given by the sick men was amply corroborated by awful but quite indescribable evidence.

The *rencontre* of Morisot and Campbell at Constantinople reminds me of a somewhat similar experience. When I was camped near Ship Mountain, a messenger arrived one night from the camp of the hunters recently alluded to, asking whether we had, by any chance, a man among us possessing any surgical knowledge. One of the party, a man named Tyrer, had been gored by a buffalo and badly hurt. Unfortunately we could give no assistance such as was needed.

The accident had been a peculiar one; not alone was the nature of the injury unusual, but so were the circumstances under which it had been inflicted. Tyrer, on his way to the camp late in the afternoon, had wounded a very large buffalo. On the following morning he went to the locality where the animal had disappeared, with the intention of taking up the spoor. Here the jungle was very dense. Suddenly he came face to face with the creature he was seeking. It charged, and was upon him before he had time even to lift his rifle. Tyrer dropped the latter, and, with the strength of desperation,

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grasped the horns of the monster close to their tips.

Then began a terrible wrestling match. The buffalo was exceptionally large, probably it was old and correspondingly stiff, for on no other grounds can one account for Tyrer having been able to save his life. Gross and unwieldy as it looks, the buffalo in its prime is as active as a cat. But Tyrer's antagonist was apparently unable to bend its neck, and get its head beneath its chest, so Tyrer was for a time able to hold on. His native bearer had dropped the spare gun and climbed into a tree.

At length Tyrer was shaken off and flung in a heap on the ground. In an instant the buffalo picked him up on one of its horns, flung him into the air and rushed away. The result to poor Tyrer was a terrible injury—one which I do not care to describe. Some weeks later the injured man was carried past our camp on a litter. He was afterwards conveyed to Natal, and thence to Europe, where a skilful operation set him right.

In 1889 I went to Johannesburg. While there I met an old friend, Charles Currey, then head of the Department of Lands and Mines, in the Cape Civil Service. We arranged to take a trip

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together to a place called Struben's Mill, which lay behind some hills on the right-hand side of the Main Reef to westward of the Golden City. Currey was bent on sketching; I on collecting ferns. The afternoon grew hot, and we longed for a cup of tea. Seeing a house high up on the hillside, with smoke issuing from its chimney, we decided to call there and try our luck.

We were hospitably received by the man in charge; he at once provided the desired refreshment. He and I found that we knew a great deal of the same country, so we began exchanging reminiscences. I told the story about Tyrer, and added that I had often wondered as to what had become of him. Our host, who had listened to my long relation with an impassive face, then remarked—

“Yes; you have got the yarn pretty right. My name is Tyrer.”

I shall never forget Currey's look of astonishment.

Veld fires were occasionally things to be reckoned with in the Low Country. Looking from the cliff-crest of the mountain range over the immense plains, one was apt to think that these were covered with dense, continuous forest. But a closer acquaintance corrected this impres-

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sion There was little jungle, but there were many large trees—and these usually stood somewhat far apart. When among them it was, as a rule, possible to get a clear view over a radius of about two hundred yards. Now and then one reached an area in which the trees were very high indeed, with clean boles running to a height of thirty to forty feet. But the ground was covered with long, coarse grass, which was tinted a soft green in summer, but in winter was yellow and dry. At all seasons the haulms were so hard that the toes of one's boots wore out with distressing quickness. It was in winter that the grass fire became a real danger.

Great tracts—perhaps hundreds of square miles in extent—might be swept by a conflagration. If, during the course of one of these, the wind happened to be blowing towards you from the direction of the fire, the danger was apt to become real and imminent. There was only one alternative; you had either at once to find some spot comparatively clear of grass and there wait until the flame-storm had swept past, or else to set the grass alight where you were and then take refuge on the burnt area.

Occasionally the trees caught alight and afforded striking spectacles at night. I think that

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when this happened the tree was very old, and a considerable portion of the trunk, from the ground upwards, was decayed. I remember once noticing an extremely large tree which had caught alight from a grass fire that had swept past. I returned along the same track more than six weeks afterwards. The grass was springing up luxuriantly, it had reached a height of several inches. But the tree was still burning. I camped near it; the tall, massive trunk, glowing on the windward side like a column of ignited charcoal and sending out a great tress of flame to leeward, was a sight never to be forgotten.

The unfortunate *balala*—"the people who are dead"—those miserable fugitives from savage justice, or, more often, remnants of clans scattered in war, often perished in veld conflagrations. They wandered, naked and weaponless, in the neutral areas lying between the territories of the different tribes, preferring the mercy of the lion and the hyæna to that of man. The appliances of these people for kindling a fire, and thus sending the conflagration on for the purpose of creating a zone of safety, were often quite inadequate for dealing with a sudden emergency.

I only know of one instance of a white man falling a victim to a veld fire. I forget this

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individual's name, although I knew him well. He, seeing the flames approaching, reached what he thought was a place of safety, for the grass was very sparse, and he reckoned on being able to beat out the fire as it approached him. But he had not taken into account the contingency of the wind freshening and flinging forward sheets of flame from the places where the grass was longer. This actually happened. He got badly, but not fatally, scorched. A search-party found him and he was assisted back to camp. Next day he was placed in a rough litter and carried by four natives in the rear of the little caravan. The day was sultry, and he suffered great pain, so he persuaded the natives to set down the litter in a shady place, meaning to get them to carry him on when the afternoon cooled.

The rest of the party proceeded on its course, unaware that the injured man had been left behind. A grass fire was seen to sweep over the country just crossed, but no particular notice was taken of it. In this fire the unhappy loiterer had been burnt to death. His bearers, when they saw the flames approaching, lost their heads, and, instead of burning a patch to be used as a refuge, fled. There are, surely, few cases on record of such bad luck as this.

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The most enchanting scenery in the Low Country was to be found in the vicinity of the rivers. These, considering that they are African, do not lie very far apart. Yet sometimes there were long stretches of waterless country to be traversed, and severe suffering from thirst was a possibility occasionally realized. Besides, as we were practically explorers in a country without human inhabitants or recognizable landmarks, we might unwittingly pass the bend of a winding river and thus recede from badly needed water. The general landscape was, as a rule, so flat, and the trees were so high, that one could draw no inference as to the whereabouts of a river from the configuration of the country.

But what joy it was, after a long, hot, fatiguing tramp, during which water had to be doled out in sips, to reach a mighty stream, perhaps several hundred yards wide, where one might drink one's fill, wash the grime from one's clothes and person, and loll in the shade of lordly trees.

In writing of those old days I find it hard to realize that the localities described are still in existence. I suppose the rivers are yet running in the old channels, but as the rainfall has been steadily decreasing they are not likely to be to-day the full, impetuous torrents of liquid

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crystal that I remember. Moreover, the game, that rapidly moving, kaleidoscopic pageant of varied animal life which made their forested banks a wonder and a joy, has disappeared.

Of all the lovely scenes through which I have wandered, the landscapes along the Olifant and the Letaba dwell in my memory as the loveliest. In those one-time almost inviolate retreats were to be found everything best calculated to delight the heart of the hunter or the lover of nature. I am, of course, assuming winter as the season, for in summer the worm "that pierces the liver and blackens the blood" made these regions almost uninhabitable for Europeans. But from June to October, inclusive, the country was healthy, the sky rarely held a cloud, the sun shone mildly, and the night was seldom, if ever, cold.

Although the banks of the Low Country rivers were usually heavily wooded, one found here and there wide grassy glades opening to the water-side. The country being flat, the river-courses were usually wide, with many large rocks standing high out of the water. Between these the streams eddy and wind. Sometimes one would camp near a rapid, and below this a deep pool was invariably to be found; in such pools the

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sea-cows, snorting and champing, might sometimes be heard throughout the night.

The process of crossing rivers was believed to be dangerous on account of crocodiles, which were often to be seen in large numbers. These reptiles, however, seldom did any damage except in the vicinity of a native kraal, where they used occasionally to seize women and children who came down to fill their pots and calabashes with water. I once saw a dog taken by one ; at least, I assumed that such was the case. The dog was swimming across a deep channel between two shallows when it gave a yelp and disappeared. There were many crocodiles in the river where this happened.

The rivers were full of fish, but I never carried any tackle, so could not catch any. But the natives of the lower reaches of the Olifant, the Letaba, and the Limpopo often spear them. Snakes I seldom saw in the Low Country. This may be accounted for by the circumstance that most of my wanderings there took place in winter. During the course of my various trips I did not see more than seven or eight snakes altogether.

Curiously enough, I saw three of these within the space of a few minutes. Near the Lower Letaba I

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reached a circular depression—the end of a long, winding, dry water-course—late one afternoon. The spot was so beautiful that I decided to camp there, instead of going on several miles farther, as I had intended. In the depression was a clear pool surrounded by great rocks and tall trees. The ground in the vicinity was carpeted with bright green grass.

After selecting a spot for my camp, I sent one of the bearers to collect fuel, and the other to fetch water for the purpose of making soup. The pool was less than fifty yards away. I heard the second bearer give a yell ; then he came running back, shouting that he had seen a big snake. Picking up my rifle, I ran to the spot he indicated, and saw about six feet of thick python disappearing among the creepers which lay tangled over the rocks. I fired at the creature but missed it.

In returning to the camping-place I nearly trod on a large puff-adder ; this I killed with a stone. Almost immediately afterwards the boy who had been sent for firewood came up with a vicious-looking black and yellow serpent squirming, broken-backed, on his stick. This was more than my nerves could stand, so after filling the billy and the canteens with water, we retired to a spot a few hundred yards away, up the

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hillside. Here the vegetation was less rank, so we felt safer.

Next morning, just before daybreak, we heard a lion killing close to the water. After day had fully broken, I went down and found some hyænas breakfasting on the remains of a water-buck.

Sleep's worst enemy in the Low Country was the hyæna. The voice of this beast is horrible ; it begins with a guttural growl and ends with a high-pitched screech. Although cowardly to a degree, hyænas would often come to within less than a hundred yards of the fire. Occasionally they might be heard on several sides at once, uttering their unspeakable yells. We always noticed that the smell of roast meat attracted them ; when meat was boiled, they were not nearly so troublesome. A shot would always send them scampering to a distance, but cartridges were not things to be wasted by the traveller in the Low Country.

On arriving at Lourenço Marques in 1874 I met a man named Good, whom I had known slightly up country. I have been told—but I do not guarantee the statement—that he was the original of Rider Haggard's "Allan Quatermain." From Good I heard sad news ; poor Pat Foote,

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one of my best friends, had died in the fortress during the previous night. I went up at once to see his remains; they lay on a wretched truckle-bed in a dingy cell.

The funeral took place that afternoon. The grave was dug among some cocoanut-palms out beyond the fœtid swamp which lay in those days—a crescent of foulness—on three sides of the town. A wall separated the swamp from the houses, and over this wall the sewage used to be cast. Poles, bearing human heads, stuck out here and there. The swamp was crossed by a causeway.

The proceedings were marked by a melancholy lack of dignity. Several of those forming the cortège were drunk. Among them was a Portuguese officer. The military guard at the causeway gate failed to present arms, so the officer rushed at the men and belaboured them with a stick. However, poor Foote was too sound asleep to be disturbed by such trifles. I wonder whether, besides myself, any who took part in those squalid obsequies are alive. I believe the palms which shaded that lonely grave have been long since cut down and that the town has extended over the site.

In the early part of 1875, after I left “The

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Reef," I worked for a short time near the head of the creek. One day a friend named McCallum came and showed me a piece of gold he had picked up on a headland which jutted over the Blyde River near Peach-tree Creek. Next day was Sunday, so we went together to the spot and took a prospect. The result was most encouraging; not alone was there a good yield for the amount of wash we had panned, but the quality of the gold suggested that it belonged to a genuine lead. Next morning we struck our tents and moved down to the scene of the discovery. As the area was not far enough from the nearest proclaimed diggings to entitle us to an extended miner's right, we just marked out a claim apiece and made no report of the matter. We pitched our tents in a little grove of peach-trees below the bluff, close to the river-bank.

The thing was a "surface" proposition; that is to say, the wash was only a few inches deep; it lay on a soft slate bottom. We fixed our sluice-box in a rapid of the river which was some two hundred yards from the claim, and was reached by a footpath we scarped down the face of the bluff. We hired a couple of boys to carry down the wash. I did the pick-and-shovel work, which included the filling of the

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gunny-bags. McCallum washed out each instalment as it arrived. This was the easiest contract I ever took on; it meant about one minute's work alternating with nearly ten minutes' rest, all day long. The first couple of days' work gave splendid results; from the gravel cleared off a space about eight feet square we got, so far as I can remember, about a pound weight of gold.

Naturally, we considered that at length our fortunes were made. Our claims measured together forty-five thousand square feet, the area we had cleared was but sixty-four. The latter number, when worked into the former, went nearly seven hundred times. And the surface appeared to be exactly the same over the whole area.

Assuming that any reliance could be placed on arithmetic, we were potential capitalists. We began to speculate as to what we would do with our money. £14,000 apiece was a large sum. I think McCallum decided to go to Scotland, there to recommence some lawsuit he had been obliged to drop for want of funds. My own firm intention was to organize an expedition to the Zambezi—not to go “foot-slogging,” as I had been doing in the Low Country, but with properly

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equipped wagons, the most modern armament, salted horses—and all the rest of it. Well, for one night, at all events, we enjoyed ourselves. I do not think we slept at all.

But we never found so much as another half-ounce of gold in those claims; we had struck the one little “patch” they contained. We hired more boys, we ran prospecting trenches in every direction, we worked late and early—often carrying the bags of wash down the scarped footpath ourselves, long after the boys had knocked off. But all was in vain. Our pound of gold melted like an icicle in the sun. We were, in local parlance, “bust.”

CHAPTER X

Prospectors start for Swaziland—Rumours as to their fate—Maclean and I decide to follow them—Precautions against lions—The Crocodile River—The Boer and the pessimist—Game and honey—Crocodiles—Difficulties in crossing the river—Maclean nearly drowned in the rapids—I go on alone—First sight of De Kaap—A labyrinth of dongas—I reach Swaziland—Baboons—On the trail of the prospectors—The mystery solved—'Ntshindeen's kraal—Swazi hospitality—How I became celebrated—A popular show—Repairing guns—Character of the Swazis—Contempt for money and love of salt—Prospecting—My welcome outstayed—A dangerous crisis—Return to the Crocodile River—The rhinoceros—Our bearers decamp—We abandon our goods—Attacked by fever—Terror of partridges—Arrival at Mac Mac.

IN the early part of 1875 a large party of Australian prospectors started from Pilgrim's Rest to seek for gold on the north-eastern borders of Swaziland. They took with them a light wagon—which could easily be taken to pieces—and a span of oxen. They were accompanied by guides. At that time little was known of the country beyond the boundaries of the Transvaal on its eastern

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side. Swaziland was, in fact, an unknown region. But rumour was rife as to fabulously rich deposits of gold in the tracts lying to the east and south-east of Lydenburg. There were, needless to say, no maps of the country in question. But under such circumstances the less known of any given region, the greater its fascination.

Some six weeks having passed without news of the party, the camp seethed with wild report as to its fortune. Some maintained that the Swazis, who were believed to be averse to the opening up of their country, had wiped out the intruders. More or less circumstantial details of the supposed massacre were current, but critical examination proved such to be quite without foundation. Then came wafts of rumour to the effect that the prospectors had "struck it rich," but were determined to keep the strike to themselves. My youthful imagination inclined to the latter view. I had a friend who knew the Swazis well, and he held it to be unlikely in the last degree that a party of peaceful prospectors would be molested. Accordingly, I made up my mind to get on the trail of the adventurers and stick to it until I found them.

My "mate" at the time was a man whom I will call Maclean. That was not his name, but

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it will do as well as if it were. Maclean belonged to an old Scottish family, and had brought a suit before the House of Lords in which he claimed a certain peerage to which great estates and many titles were attached. He failed through being unable to prove the marriage of one of his ancestors. We had made a small strike of gold on one of the terraces of the Blyde River, but this was soon worked out, and we spent most of our gains in pursuing a vanished "lead." After some hesitation Maclean agreed to accompany me.

Our united means amounted to less than five pounds sterling. This we invested in flour, tea, strong boots, and other indispensables. We possessed an old gun—a double-barrelled fowling-piece that had once been a flint-lock. The spring driving one hammer was too weak to discharge a percussion-cap, that of the other was just strong enough to cause detonation on an average twice out of three attempts. We could get no bullet-mould—the gun being of an unusual calibre—so we used to chop off chunks of lead and roll them between flat stones until the requisite degrees of size and rotundity had been attained. By using stones with the surface slightly roughened we could always reduce the

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size of the bullet, but the work of doing so was laborious in the extreme.

We hired two Bapedi boys to carry some of our goods. One was named Indogozan; I forget the name of the other. They turned out to be lazy scoundrels, and gave endless trouble by loitering. On weighing our "swags" at Mac Mac the day we started, Maclean's and mine tipped the scale at fifty-six pounds each. Those of the boys weighed, respectively, about fifteen pounds less.

We descended the mountain range at Spitzkop. The trail was easily found. After entering the Low Country we halted each night at a camping-place of the party we were pursuing, and built our fire on the cold ashes of their one-time hearth. Occasionally we reached some obstacle over which no wagon could possibly have been drawn, and where there were evidences that these practical explorers had taken the vehicle to pieces and carried it over. Game was not very plentiful; even had it been so our gun was not of the kind to do much execution. As we approached the Crocodile River Valley lions began to make themselves heard at night. Maclean was nervous; I fear it was my habit to trade on this. It was he who used to collect an immense pile of fuel

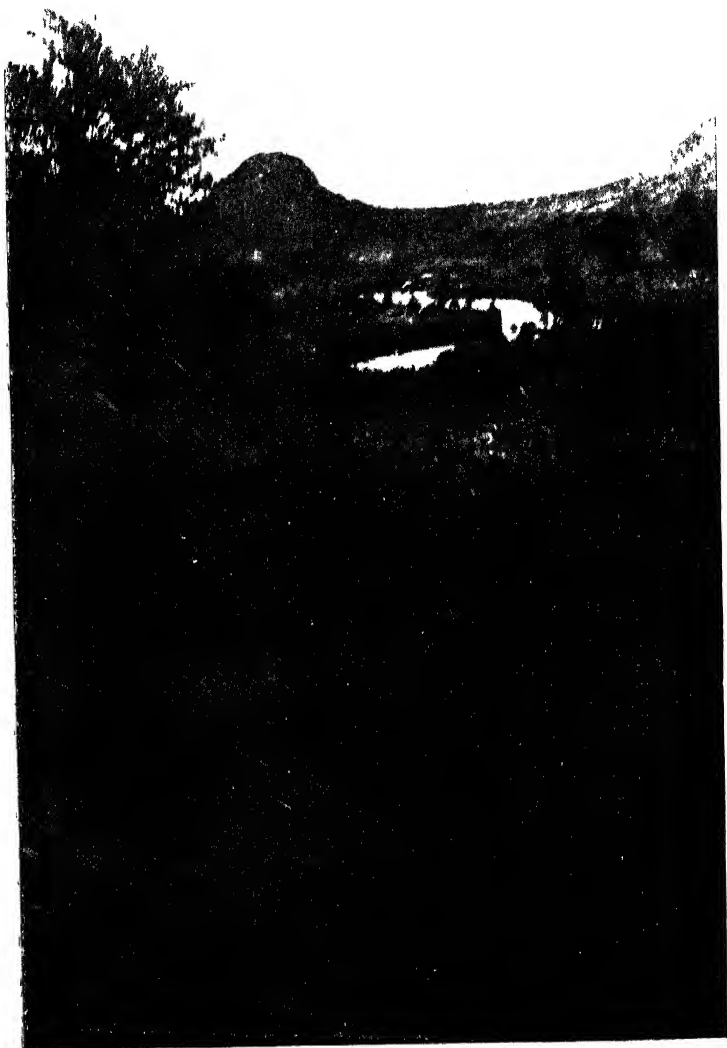


Photo by the Author in 1911.

SITE OF CAMP ON CROCODILE RIVER IN 1875.

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every night, and I felt I could turn in and sleep soundly—fortified with the knowledge that the watch-fire would not be left untended.

At the Crocodile River we met with a serious check. There was no drift, and the stream was still swollen from the summer rains. Drawn up on the opposite bank was a raft, by means of this the prospectors had crossed. We camped and considered the situation.

We found two men with a wagon at the river. The owner of the wagon was an old Boer named Niekerk; he owned a farm in the Lydenburg District, but spent most of his life wandering about in search of game. Niekerk's companion was an ex-man-of-war's man named Rawlings, one of the most ill-tempered and pessimistic beings I have ever met. He was small, hatchet-faced, and foxy in appearance. His face was much disfigured by a bullet-wound through both jaws—received, so he said, in a skirmish with slavers near Zanzibar. Rawlings's disposition suggested a possible descent from Mr. Squeers and Mrs. Gummidge.

Niekerk and Rawlings were a strangely assorted couple. They could not quarrel, for the reason that Niekerk had no English and Rawlings no Dutch. Niekerk held stoutly to the theory that

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all Englishmen were mad, more or less, and excused his companion's peculiarities accordingly. He had met Rawlings tramping in the Transvaal and given him a lift. Rawlings was not particular as to locality, having inverted the theory of Dr. Pangloss, and settled to his own satisfaction that this was the worst of all possible worlds, he held all places to be more or less equally vile. So he had followed Niekerk grumblingly down the mountain pass leading to the Low Country, and had been wasting his pessimism on the desert air of the Crocodile River Valley for several weeks before our arrival.

Game was here more plentiful. I borrowed Niekerk's rifle and shot a waterbuck and several klipspringers. Our camp was surrounded by immense domes of granite, and each morning the summit of almost every dome was occupied by several klipspringers. The bearers were much delighted, they had hated our diet of unvarying *askoek*. We also found quantities of honey. Honey-birds were numerous, and ever ready to oblige by pointing out a bees' nest. The scenery was very beautiful. To the north-west towered some of the loftiest peaks of the Drakensberg. The bare, granite domes around us were almost hemispherical in shape. They arose out of

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swamp-rooted forest. The vegetation was very rich.

The problem as to how we were to cross the river now became very pressing indeed. We could not afford to waste any time, as our food-supply was extremely limited. The weather was hot and moist, so we could not manage to dry any meat; the flies got at it at once. One of two things had to be done: we had to cross the river within a very few days or else turn back. And turning back was a thing I had always hated doing.

The river was indeed a formidable obstacle. It showed no signs of subsiding, for thunderstorms still broke on and behind the mountain range. In the vicinity where the raft lay the channel was about a hundred yards wide and was very deep. The current here was sluggish, but just above was a long and dangerous rapid with many rocks projecting from the water. On these rocks crocodiles of various sizes used to bask with half-opened jaws. Around the head of each saurian several little birds would flutter and hop, occasionally entering the toothed death-trap without the least apparent fear. These birds were useful in picking parasites from between the monsters' teeth.

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One day in exploring the river-bank above the rapids in search of a drift, I walked along the edge of the water immediately at the foot of a steep sand-dune about fifteen feet in height. The top of this, but I was unaware of the fact, was occupied by a large number of crocodiles of all sizes, they ranged from one to about fifteen feet in length. These took alarm and flung themselves into the water, both in front and behind me. One cut me across the shin with its tail in passing. I carry the mark of the cut to this day.

To return to the problem of crossing the river. We had brought with us some strong, light, hempen rope for the purpose of lowering our swags down steep and difficult places. This, with infinite labour we unwound, separating the strands and joining them again lengthwise. The result was still too short for our purpose, so we sought in the forest for monkey-ropes. These we crushed, and, after separating and partly drying the fibres, we twisted the latter into a strong, light cable.

When we judged that our cable, plus the line, was long enough to reach the other side, we attempted to carry one end of the latter across the river for the purpose of towing back the raft. Over and over again one of the bearers

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and I made the attempt, but when we got about three-parts of the way across, the slow, steady pressure of the current would fill the bend of the line and sweep us down-stream. We had spent most of the previous day in shooting at crocodiles on the rocks in the rapid, for the purpose of driving them from the neighbourhood. We had wounded several. On the day of our attempt not a saurian was to be seen. Nevertheless, I felt extremely nervous. The carcass of one monster we had wounded afterwards washed up ; it measured upwards of sixteen feet.

After our repeated failures to carry the line across, nothing remained to be done but to attempt a crossing at the rapids. This we succeeded in doing, but the attempt nearly cost Maclean his life. He was an indifferent swimmer. The day was blazing hot. I stripped, but Maclean, disregarding every one's advice, insisted on swimming in his shirt. We had to creep slowly from rock to rock, through tumbling water, with an occasional short swim through a deeper channel. The river was here much wider than at the scene of our former attempt.

When we were about half-way across Maclean stumbled. As he attempted to recover his foothold, facing the time down-stream, the current filled

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his shirt from behind and carried it over his head. Then he rolled helplessly down the rapid towards the deep reach. I floundered after, and succeeded in overtaking him. He was quite exhausted ; it was only with great difficulty that I succeeded in getting him to the bank, fortunately to that side on which the raft lay.

After a short rest we launched the raft, or, as it turned out to be, a sort of square, flat-bottomed boat, with sides only a few inches deep, and built of planks. But it was shrunk and gaping from the heat, and at once filled with water. It was sufficiently buoyant to float when empty, but would not sustain any weight. We drew it out again ; caulking was out of the question, so we collected dry reeds and tied them into bundles with grass-ropes made on the spot. We fastened these bundles to the bottom and sides, and launched our galley once more. This time we propelled her triumphantly, but very slowly, to the other side, where landing was comparatively easy. We had found in her two rough wooden paddles.

I had, by this time, been exposed stark-naked to the sun for over five hours. I felt—and no doubt looked—like a raw beefsteak. Maclean's foot had got severely hurt in the course of his adventure, and he was much bruised and battered.

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Accordingly it was decided that I should go on with Indogozan and his companion, leaving Maclean behind.

So next afternoon the Pessimist and Maclean ferried the two bearers and me across. The Pessimist bade me a doleful farewell, and suggested that I should leave any mementos for my friends behind, with instructions as to their disposal. To comfort him I wrote the names and addresses of my nearest relations on a leaf torn out of my pocket-book, and gave him the latter. He was absolutely certain that the prospectors had met their doom under the Swazi spears, and that a like fate would be mine.

My course lay along a winding pathway until it topped the first ridge, then it turned abruptly to the left to avoid a swampy hollow. However, a rhinoceros, startled by my approach, plunged through this hollow, clearing a pathway through the dense brushwood, so I followed his tracks and ascended the hill on the other side. Here, as I expected, I again found the old trail. That rhinoceros saved me a detour of several miles.

Night was now falling; the full moon arose as I stepped forward briskly; the trail lay clear across the long grass. It led mainly uphill for about fifteen miles, with occasional un-

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dulations. Once I heard lions roaring in the distance. The bearers begged of me to halt and allow them to light a fire, but I was so delighted at being safely across the river that I determined not to stop. However, we eventually reached the edge of an almost precipitous slope, which fell into a hollow brimming with dense, snow-white mist. A solitary tree stood at the very edge of the steep ; here I decided to camp.

When I awoke next morning I was wet through and chilled to the bone. The mist was so dense that objects six feet away were almost invisible. After some difficulty we managed to gather twigs from the tree sufficient to make a "billy," of tea. The light waxed ; a strange and undefinable sensation thrilled me. I seemed to be near some surprise. For a considerable time the air was perfectly still. Then, suddenly, a movement became noticeable ; a sudden breeze sang out of the west, and the mist-shroud rolled away, leaving a perfectly clear atmosphere.

To my dying day I shall never forget the sight that met my gaze. I was just on the northern verge of the Great Kaap Basin. It is in extent probably thirty miles long by twenty wide, and is shaped somewhat like a pear—the larger end being scooped out of the mighty mass of the

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Drakensberg. At the narrow end the hills dwindled somewhat, but straight across the widest part of the valley the dark-blue mountains of Swaziland were piled in abrupt immensity, shimmering through an opaline medium which I cannot describe as haze, for the atmosphere was as clear and limpid as a dew-drop. This medium seemed to make the more distant salient contours miraculously palpable, and to fill every hollow with richest mystery.

Tier upon mighty tier the Delectable Mountains arose, the higher peaks shining in the new sunlight. I must have felt like Linnæus when for the first time he saw a field of gorse in bloom.

With a glad and hopeful heart I followed the trail in its zigzag course down the steep mountain-side, which was vocal with the chanting call of myriads of partridges. Covey after covey, flushed around me; the whole country, far and near, seemed to be alive with them. Before the end of that trip I got to hate and dread partridges more than any living thing, but that morning I loved them.

Now arose another difficulty: the bottom of the Kaap Valley, towards the centre, was a labyrinth of dongas, and the trail, hitherto so

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definite, split up into innumerable strands. These crossed and recrossed each other bewilderingly, like the fibres of an unravelled rope. The dongas were both wide and deep; in many instances they were quite impassable. Occasionally I would find myself on the tip of a promontory, the sides of which were precipices perhaps several yards high. These were footed in jungle, which sometimes was quite impenetrable. However, like Theseus, I eventually managed to win through, although no kind Ariadne came to my assistance. But I had hopelessly lost the trail.

It was dusk when I reached the foothills of the Swaziland mountains. Far off, as I approached, I could see the twinkling lights at the kraals on the high ledges. I camped at the foot of a very high, naked peak of granite, which was almost sheer on the side facing me. This peak turned out to be densely populated by baboons. At intervals, all night long, pandemonium reigned among these brutes. Occasionally a general fight seemed to take place; then stones would come crashing down the face of the precipice, sometimes falling in dangerous proximity to the camp. Once or twice the wrath of the community was apparently directed against

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one individual, who would be hunted round and round the upper zone of the peak. When caught this (presumable) delinquent's yells of anguish would peal shrilly above the hoarse chorus of his pursuers' angry voices.

Next morning I struck eastward along the base of the foothills, searching for the trail. The country was intersected by many pathways, but none of these showed signs of a wagon having passed. It seemed, moreover, inconceivable that a vehicle could have ascended such a lofty, steep mountain range as the one which towered on my right. I noticed some cattle grazing on a high ledge, so I wended thither. Here I found three herd-boys, and they gave me the information I was seeking. The prospectors had ascended the mountains through a valley still farther to the eastward and had gone on. They had been heard of very far ahead—still going. With somewhat damped enthusiasm I followed.

Well, I kept like a hound on the trail of the prospectors right through Swaziland. When the trail turned suddenly westward, I threw up the sponge, for I immediately and correctly inferred what had happened: the party had given up its quest and returned, taking a course through that part of the Transvaal known as New

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Scotland. Their prospecting could not have amounted to much. I often, long subsequently, wondered as to what their feelings were when they heard of the discovery of the Sheba Reef, for they must have walked over almost the very spot.

Sadly, and with chastened feelings, I began to retrace my steps. My two Bapedi were in constant dread of their lives, for an old and deadly feud existed between their tribe and the Swazis. They followed me like my shadow, sometimes in a most embarrassing manner. Having been on my forward journey hospitably entertained at the kraal of a prominent *induna* named 'Ntshindeen, I decided to return there and rest. I felt half-dead from fatigue and semi-starvation. My clothing was in rags. The only supplies I had left were a little meal and some salt.

At 'Ntshindeen's kraal I spent a few halcyon days. For one reason or another, possibly on account of my extremely youthful appearance, I was treated with great consideration. A very large hut, the whole inside of which was lined with the finest basket-work, was given me to occupy. It was the beginning of the season of green maize; every morning an armful of

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luscious cobs was deposited at my door. An immense earthen pot of honey and a skin milk-sack were placed at my disposal. All day long I would drowse under a tree which stood within a few yards of the hut door, with Indogozan or his companion waving a bough to keep off the flies. I only woke up to eat or to smoke. The prospectors were forgotten ; so were Maclean and the Pessimist. I tasted, to the fullest extent, the sweetness of long-needed rest.

But the evenings were somewhat trying to one of my bashful temperament. My fame had spread abroad ; from distant kraals people flocked to see me every night. For the one and only time in my life I knew what it was to be celebrated.

One very old woman, a "doctor," took me under her patronage. I would lie near a small fire towards the back of the hut, the two Bapedi crouching behind me. The old woman, with a sheaf of dry reeds in her withered hand, would squat on the floor near my head. Then the hut would fill up with men and women, who would arrange themselves in a crescent-shaped mass, with the front rank lying down, the next crouching, those farthest from me standing.

The old woman would select a few suitable

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reeds from the bundle, light them as a torch, which she held so that I would be illuminated, and deliver a lecture. All my points would be gone over in detail—the unusual colour of my eyes, the whiteness of my skin, and the length of my hair were the occasion of much comment. By request I would take off my shirt or pull up a leg of my much-tattered trousers. Farther than this modesty prevented my going. Sometimes a similar ordeal would have to be gone through several times in the course of an evening.

The only work I did was in the matter of repairing guns, of which, by the way, the Swazis possessed but very few. I had a knife, the handle of which contained a screwdriver and various other tools; the condition of my own gun necessitated the carrying of a nipple-wrench. The latter was a very old instrument; it had sockets graded to fit nipples of various sizes. The trouble with the Swazi guns was almost invariably dirt or rust. Some I put right without much difficulty; others were quite beyond the possibility of repair.

After a somewhat wide experience I can truthfully say that the Swazis, at the time I knew them, were the finest savages I ever came in

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contact with. They were gentlemen in all essentials, they were manly, brave, and independent. The white race had not yet degraded them by contact with its corroding fringe.

The following incident will serve to illustrate their courage: Six of 'Ntshindeen's men, armed with nothing but spears and sticks, came upon a full-grown lion among the foothills through which I had journeyed. The brute was a well-known depredator among the herds. He had, in fact, given up killing game in favour of the easier pursuit of killing cattle. He had also killed two herd-boys. The six attacked without hesitation. They slew the lion, but in the struggle three men lost their lives. Two were killed on the spot; the third had his arm chewed to a pulp. He was brought back to his kraal, but gangrene at once set in, and he died on the third day. The other three were badly mauled, but they recovered.

The Swazis knew nothing of money, except that it was supposed to be worth something in parts remote from their then-isolated land. The value of cash was gauged according to size; you could get more for a penny than for a sovereign—but not much for either. Gunpowder, lead, and caps they were, of course, anxious to obtain—

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for even if an individual did not own a gun, it was always possible to borrow such a weapon.

But the thing they valued above all else was salt. Their country contained no saltpans, and they were cut off from the sea by a strip of pestiferous jungle, which, moreover, belonged to the Portuguese — or was supposed so to belong. Fortunately I had brought with me a small bag of salt; it contained about a pound in weight. Men used to come from long distances to beg for a pinch. As I did not want the bag to be seen, it was my practice, when salt was asked for, to enter the hut and bring out a small pinch in my hand. On such occasions the old show-woman would watch for me, and after I had transferred the salt to the one who came for it, she used to seize my hand and lick out the palm.

After a week's rest I began prospecting in the neighbourhood. I must have "panned" in the present Sheba Valley and all over the vicinity, in which Barberton now stands. It was only alluvial gold for which I sought; there was a theory current among diggers of those days that South African quartz contained no metal. It was thought that quartz reefs had been subjected to such heat that all metals had been

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expelled. "Colour" I found almost everywhere I tried, but no coarse gold.

Soon after I commenced prospecting I noticed a change in the demeanour of the natives ; they no longer treated me with the same friendliness. In this matter they were, it must be confessed, actuated by sound instinctive considerations ; it was the subsequent discovery of gold that caused their sad deterioration. 'Ntshindeen, who was always my good friend—but who often had to be away from home on the king's business—gave me a confidential warning to beware of the boys, as they did not like me. This dislike was shown mainly in a petty persecution of my two Bapedi, to whom insulting remarks were often made. I felt I had outstayed my welcome, so prepared to depart.

Accordingly, one morning I packed the swags, distributed the remainder of the salt among the elders of the kraal—giving the old woman who used to lick my palm an extra allowance—bade farewell to my kind hosts, and started. About five-and-twenty big boys—several of them almost men in stature—surrounded my little party. All these boys had sticks ; several carried assegais. Just below the kraal, on the steep hillside, was a fence with an open gap ; through this I had to

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pass. The boys ran forward and collected just beyond the gap. A number of men stood together, about a hundred yards away. It was abundantly clear that trouble was coming.

Several boys collected behind me as I approached the gap. I sent the two Bapedi through first. They went in fear and trembling ; I followed immediately after. As the second of my bearers passed through the gap a big boy sprang forward and seized his swag. I at once struck the assailant a smashing blow on the chest with the butt-end of my gun. He fell headlong among his companions. I then, with deliberation, cocked both barrels, walked slowly forward, and told the Bapedi to follow. The boys opened a passage through their ranks and we passed through. Then the men began to shout and jeer, and the boys, stung by this, ran down the hill-side after us, brandishing their sticks. One poised his assegai, as though he were about to throw it, but I levelled my gun at him and he swerved. I then turned, and we went on without further molestation. But the war-cry pealed forth, and for a long time we could see people running hither and thither among the kraals.

I believe that on this occasion my Bapedi had a narrow escape, although I do not think any

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harm was intended to me, personally. A few months afterwards a prospector named Coffin was in the same vicinity. His two boys, also Bapedi, were killed in his presence.

I had for some days been suffering from intestinal disturbance and a slight headache, so strongly suspected that I had contracted fever. It took me sixty long and fatiguing hours to get back to the Crocodile River. I arrived there after dusk, and shouted for the raft. Maclean and the Pessimist soon paddled across. The latter was, I am quite convinced, much disappointed at my having turned up. During supper, while I was relating my experiences, the Pessimist interjected the remark that I was a liar. After a more or less drawn battle, Maclean and Niekerk restored peace, so that both supper and narrative were finished without further interruption. But Niekerk, who had been unable to understand the words which gave rise to the disturbance, was confirmed in his ideas as to the essential insanity of the English.

Our little patrol-tent stood about ten yards from the tail of Niekerk's wagon. One morning at daybreak a big black rhinoceros stood grunting and sniffing in the space between. The barrel of Niekerk's rifle protruded slowly from the

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wagon-tilt. When the animal felt the sting of the bullet it swung round and went off at a gallop along the river-bank. Rhino could not have been much hurt, for his spoor was to be seen a few days afterwards fifteen miles away, and it was still the spoor of a running animal. Game was now scarce, so Niekerk decided to shift his quarters.

As we had done no prospecting to speak of, it was decided to explore the Crocodile Valley, in the direction of the mountains, before going home. We accordingly once more crossed the river, and proceeded against the stream along its southern bank, panning as we went. "Colour" was to be found everywhere, but no sign of "pay." On the second morning we had an unpleasant surprise; the Bapedi had bolted during the night. They had taken nothing of our belongings. I was very wrathful; but time brings perspective; to-day I am inclined to think that these boys were justified in clearing out. They had been terribly frightened in Swaziland, and when we again crossed the river they may have thought, naturally enough, that we were going back.

In sadness we sorted our belongings, selecting the indispensable and the more valuable; we

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cached the remainder in a krantz cleft. I wonder if it is still where we hid it? Then, the flood having somewhat subsided, we went westward along the river-bank until we found a fordable spot. Here we crossed and, feeling much chastened, tramped off in the direction of Pilgrim's Rest. As we struggled on we tried to comfort ourselves with a foretaste of the vengeance which we would wreak on Indogozan and his companion when we caught them. However, catch them we never did.

It now became quite clear that I had contracted fever. Headache, dizziness, internal pains, and deadly weakness had me in their grip. Partridges got on my nerves, and became the terror of my life. The country was full of these birds, which were very tame. The whirring scream of a covey, when it flushed around me, almost caused distraction. On such occasions I have often dropped flat in my tracks.

In its early stages, fever is generally more or less intermittent; the subject generally feels either worse or better than he really is. Eventually, however, by hook or by crook, I got back to Mac Mac. Maclean went on to Pilgrim's Rest. I collapsed, and lay in my patrol-tent, alone and untended, for several days. Then Mr. (after-

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wards Sir Drummond) Dunbar and his kind wife took me in, and tended me like truly Good Samaritans. I was as tough as nails. The attack proved to be a comparatively light one, so I managed to pull through.

CHAPTER XI

Weakness after fever—I engage in commerce—Rats—The commandeered cat—My commercial ineptitude—Tom Simpson surprises Wolff—Close of my commercial career—Saulez—His thrashing of the bullies—Gardiner holds up the bank—Nicknames—Conferring a patent of nobility—"Old Nelly"—"A poor man's lead"—"Charley Brown's Gully"—Swindled by my partner—My discovery on the mountain—A lonely time—Waiting for rain—Disappointment and despair—Abandonment of my work—Departure—Once more a tramp.

AFTER rallying from my bout of fever I felt terribly weak. I was kindly looked after for a few weeks by some friends, but it was imperatively necessary that I should, at the earliest possible date, once more begin to earn a livelihood. I was now absolutely penniless. Manual labour was, for the time, quite out of the question. The least physical exertion, more especially if it involved bending down, caused a sickening sense of dizziness and loss of vision. For some little time I resembled one of those dolls whose eyes

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disappear when placed in any but an upright position.

A Natal firm, R. T. N. James & Co., had a store on top of the steep hill, just where the up-creek road left the Lower Camp. Mr. Shepperd, the manager, was a friend of mine. One day he saw me at Mac Mac, and, taking pity on my condition, offered me work in the shop. I jumped at the chance.

So next Sunday I started for Pilgrim's Rest. The path, which could only be traversed on foot, led over the big divide, and involved a heavy climb, followed by a steep descent. I look all day for the journey of nine miles. It necessitated a terrible effort. Fortunately, however, the day was cool. Several times I was on the point of fainting, and was obliged to lie down. Strangely enough, it was the descent that I found more distressing than the climb. The tendons just above my knees had become slackened through weakness, and refused to act as a brake. I shall never forget that walk.

The business was a general one in the most comprehensive sense of the term. We sold groceries, drapery, hardware, butcher's meat, bread, and strong drink. The building was a large one of galvanized iron. It stood on one

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side of the road, Mr. Shepperd's dwelling-house was on the other. The store was overrun with rats. I had to sleep on the counter, and the beastly vermin ran squeaking over the premises all night long. Often they awoke me by running across my face. I dreaded those rats more than ever I did the lions in the Low Country.

A friend, hearing of my plight, commandeered a cat at Mac Mac, and brought it to me in a bag late one Saturday night. That Eastern potentate we all have read of in our childhood was not more grateful to Dick Whittington than I was to this benefactor. The shop was closed at 11 p.m., so, after shutting every place of exit, I let the cat out of the bag. Although very wild and fierce, after the long imprisonment and the rough journey, it soon settled down to work.

That night was one of great enjoyment both to the cat and to myself. I lay awake for hours listening to this good angel preying on the Hosts of Midian which had so grievously tormented me. Next morning rats lay dead all over the shop, each with its head bitten off. The cat showed signs of scandalous repletion, but it, nevertheless, fought the good fight all through

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Sunday. It came up at my call to be stroked as though I had known it from kittenhood. It never made the least attempt to escape. Soon there was not a rat or a mouse on the premises.

Commerce never attracted me. At the store of Mr. James I thoroughly hated my work. Mr. Shepperd, the butcher, the baker, and I formed the staff. The butcher and baker, respectively, killed and baked by night, and sold the products of their skill by day. I was principally responsible for the grocery and hardware branches. But I could never wrap up a pound of sugar neatly, however hard I might try ; and the entries I made in the books of the firm would, I am sure, have puzzled the best actuary. Although a good deal of merchandise passed through my hands, I fear I must have done the business a lot of harm, for there were many complaints on the part of customers as to the manner in which their orders were executed.

I well remember the case of a man who came very late one Saturday night to purchase a pair of boots. The foot-gear then affected by the digger was enormously heavy and had heel-plates almost as thick as horseshoes. The boots were joined in pairs by pieces of string, and hung by

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these on nails stuck in the rafters, the latter being about twelve feet above the floor. When a pair had to be lifted down, a long bamboo, with a spike at right angles to the end, was placed under the string.

This particular customer was difficult to fit; pair after pair was hooked down, but none were just what he wanted. As bad luck would have it, he happened to look up as I was endeavouring to get hold of a particularly large pair which were hanging just over his head. The connecting string broke, and one of the boots, iron heel-plate downwards, caught him across the bridge of the nose and cut him to the bone. For this purely accidental occurrence I was severely blamed, yet I never could see that I was at fault.

Tom Simpson, the butcher, was a character in his way. He was a middle-sized, wiry, foxy-coloured man, with a squeaky voice. His habits were retiring, and his manner was shy. He was, in fact, about the last man one would have thought capable of "putting up" a fight. However, a somewhat wide experience has taught me that appearances in this connection are apt to be deceitful; the quiet, unassuming man is very often a dangerous customer.

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One Sunday afternoon Simpson and I were taking a stroll together. We met Wolff, who had been my mate at "The Reef." Wolff was a man with the appearance of enormous strength, but he was slow in movement and muscle-bound. He very seldom touched alcohol, and the slightest indulgence made him quarrelsome.

Wolff stopped me, and we had a conversation, about nothing in particular. Simpson was in a hurry to get back to the scene of his work, so he asked me if I were going on with him. Wolff, who evidently had been drinking—although he was by no means intoxicated—resented this, and made use of some very insulting language. Simpson made no reply, so Wolff gave him a hard slap across the face. Simpson retreated a few steps, rolled up his sleeves, and stood in an attitude of defence. Wolff rushed at him like a furious bull, and I began to wonder as to where I would be able to borrow a wheelbarrow for the purpose of taking home the Simpson remains.

Then followed a most astounding spectacle. For a few minutes Simpson acted strictly on the defensive, retreating before his antagonist and guarding himself from the sledge-hammer blows. I noticed that he was very smart on his feet—

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always a good sign in a boxing-match—and that he was cunningly drawing Wolff uphill after him. Wolff began to breathe hard and to perspire ; I felt that the barrow might not be wanted after all.

Suddenly Simpson's tactics changed ; he got in over Wolff's guard and, in as many seconds, planted six terrible blows on the latter's face. With both eyes closed, his nose streaming blood, and his lips badly tattered, Wolff collapsed—a melancholy object-lesson of the truth of the preacher's text : "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

About four weeks brought my commercial career to a close. The manager and I parted good friends, but he made no secret of his satisfaction at getting rid of me. I was as unskilful in the matter of tying up parcels at the end of my term of service as I was at the beginning. But I had been of some use in the matter of clearing the store of rats. The cat and I had become very good friends ; it was quite a wrench parting with that devoted animal. If the progeny, which were expected to arrive soon after I left, only inherited the keenness and skill of their mother, there ought not to have been a rat left, a year afterwards, in the Northern Transvaal.

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Tom Simpson and his David-like victory over Goliath-Wolff reminds me of another man who was very skilful in the use of his hands. He went by the name of Saulez. I know his real name, but will not mention it, although I am absolutely convinced that its concealment was not due to any unworthy cause. Saulez was young, very slightly built, fair-haired, and almost effeminate in appearance. But he was the wickedest and most wonderful fighter I have ever seen floor a bully. Although he thoroughly enjoyed using his fists, he never sought a quarrel. There were four men in the creek who were always spoiling for a fight. They were rather dreaded, for on Saturday afternoons they used to go from bar to bar, looking for an excuse to thrash somebody. In the natural course of events Saulez met them, and a fight—or rather a series of fights—was the result. He thrashed them soundly in detail without getting so much as a scratch.

A couple of weeks afterwards, three of the four laid in wait for Saulez and tackled him collectively. He again thrashed them, and with the greatest ease.

On another occasion Saulez struck a man by mistake. He immediately apologized, but the

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man refused to be placated. Saulez then offered to allow the aggrieved party to strike him, promising not to return the blow. But there was a condition attached: if the man took advantage of the offer Saulez would afterwards "go for" him. The man, who was powerfully built, thought he had the game in his hands, so he hauled off and struck Saulez a terrible blow between the eyes. But he soon had cause to regret his action, for he got a most severe thrashing.

I once saw a very smart thing done by an old Australian digger named Gardiner. He was the one after whom "Gardiner's Point," just below the Middle Camp, was named. One afternoon he appeared at the Lower Camp with a barrow, a pick, a shovel, a pan, and four pegs. The latter he gravely hammered into the ground, enclosing a square with sides of a hundred and fifty feet. In the middle of this stood the local branch of the Natal Bank. Gardiner then entered the bank and gave notice to the manager to remove the building, as the site was required for mining purposes. This proceeding was strictly in accordance with the Mining Law. The person giving notice in such a case would, of course, be obliged to pay the expenses of removal.

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Before the manager had time to recover from his surprise, Gardiner went to a spot on the right-hand side of the steps leading to the bank entrance, loosened a couple of square yards of the surface ground, shovelled it into his barrow, and trundled the latter down to the nearest part of the creek. After a short time he returned and informed the manager that, as he had changed his mind, the bank need not be shifted. Then he pulled out his pegs. Here is the explanation: Most of the creek gold was crusted with flakes of ironstone, so that when nuggets were brought to the bank for sale, they used to be placed in a large iron mortar and pounded. The pounding was done by a native—always at the spot from which Gardiner removed the surface ground. This practice had been followed for a very long time, and Gardiner inferred that small particles of gold must have escaped from time to time under the loose cover of the mortar and through the central hole in which the pestle worked. The amount of the “wash up” was three and a half ounces.

Quite a large number of the diggers were known by nicknames; in most instances these quite superseded the original patronymics. Most men who knew the Transvaal thirty years ago

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will remember "Count" Nelmapius. The title was subsequently dropped, but for years it was used, and apparently enjoyed, by the holder. It may be of interest if I describe how the patent of nobility came to be conferred in this case. The thing happened at Mac Mac, in a hostel known as "The Spotted Dog," which was run by old Tommy Austin. Half a dozen diggers were lounging in the bar. Quoth one—

"I hear a new chum's turned up to-day."

"So. What's his name?"

"Oh, I did hear it, but I've forgotten. It sounded like Nellapius, or Nelampus, or something of that sort."

"I expect he's some —— foreigner," said old Austin; "let's call him the Count."

Accordingly, Count he became, and Count he remained for many years. Up to the middle eighties the papers invariably referred to this individual as Count Nelmapius.

Many other nicknames come to mind as I think of those old days. "Yankee Dan," "Boozer," "Texas Dan," and "Old Nelly" are specimens. The latter was a strange character. He was seventy years of age, but was as active as a cat and as strong as a buffalo. He was, except Sandow, probably the strongest man I have ever

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seen. Bred from a navvy stock, Old Nelly had wandered over the world for many years, from one mining camp to another. He invariably got drunk on Saturdays, and, whenever he could afford it, on other days as well. For some reason, which I could never fathom, this strange being took a fancy to me, and used to inflict on me long homilies on the dangers to which youth was exposed. He continually urged me never to get drunk on anything but beer. When I suggested the application of his principles to himself, he would say—

“Ah! lad, but oi’m different.”

Whenever he had money in hand Old Nelly would spend it in drink. I once asked him how long he had been doing this sort of thing. His reply was—

“All me loife, lad, all me loife.”

I left the James Emporium with about £2 in my pocket. I was still too weak to be able to earn wages; ague used to recur regularly every fortnight. So I decided to go down and “fossick” among the Blyde River terraces. Here was “a poor man’s lead,” out of which one could make about a pound a week by working hard. By working easily I thought I might be able to earn about half that sum. This would be enough

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to keep body and soul together. So I spent most of my £2 in buying a wheelbarrow, and in this I trundled down more than half a ton of wash every day to the rapid in which my sluice-box was fixed. I managed to earn about two shillings per day.

One afternoon I saw several diggers going over to one of the terraces, where a man I knew named Charlie Brown was working in a shallow gully. I saw that a "rush" was in progress, so joined in. The gully was short; it contained but seven claims in all. As I got my pegs in at one end of a claim, another digger was putting his in at the corresponding corner opposite. There was nothing to do but take up the claim in partnership.

My partner was a Swede, who went under an Irish name. I hated him from the beginning, feeling that he was a rogue. We barrowed the stuff down to old Lochhead's race, where we hired a water-right. Our wash-up for the first week was a couple of ounces of gold. I worked in the claim while my partner attended to the sluice-box. He became more and more offensive. Soon a friend of his came along and offered me £15 for my share. I accepted the offer.

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It is quite certain that I was swindled—that my partner had found much more gold than he divided with me. The lead was both narrow and shallow, so that the claim was soon worked out. The gold found in it sold for over £1,400. "Charlie Brown's Gully" was one of the richest of the smaller leads that were struck.

Immediately after leaving the Lower Camp, when proceeding up-creek, if one looked squarely to the right, a high saddle between two mountain peaks was visible. I had several times walked over this place and been struck by its similarity to the formation at "The Reef," which I have already described. On the day after I sold out at "Charlie Brown's Gully" I again visited this saddle and took a "prospect." There was a small spring some distance down the mountain-side. I bagged about fifty pounds of wash, carried it down to the spring, and panned it out. The result was most encouraging; I found several small nuggets of rough gold.

Reaching the top of the saddle involved a breathless climb. There was no water in its vicinity nearer than the little spring I have mentioned. This was a mere trickle at the base of a big rock. However, by "puddling" I managed to make a small dam which would at night collect

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enough water to admit of a limited amount of panning or cradling by day.

For several consecutive days I ascended the mountain. The wash, which consisted of rough quartz-pebbles mixed with earth, was about nine inches deep ; it lay on a soft slate bottom. The wind blew hard and the wash was dry, so I lifted shovelful after shovelful of the latter as high as I could and let it trickle slowly down. The object of this was to winnow out as much of the sand as possible. After picking out nearly all the pebbles, I placed about forty pounds' weight of the residue in the gunny-bag and humped it down to the spring. Load after load I carried down. It was then too late to do any panning, so I stumbled down the mountain-side in the gathering gloom.

Next morning I recommenced my humping. Early in the afternoon I panned out all I had carried down. I found nearly half a pennyweight of gold in the heel of the dish. This was a splendid prospect. It was evident that the ground was rich. On the following days I took a prospect from a different spot on the saddle, with a similar result. I should, perhaps, explain that the finding of "rough" gold in a new place is always an event of considerable significance.

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Fine gold, or, as it is called, "colour," does not count ; it is to be found everywhere.

Here, then, was payable gold ; that is to say, it would have been payable had there been water in the neighbourhood. The prospect I had taken was an extremely rich one. What was to be done? After long consideration I decided to excavate a reservoir on the hillside in the vicinity of the deposit, and trust to its being filled with rain. The month was October ; thunderstorms were due. So far, however, the season had been exceptionally dry.

With the assistance of a couple of boys, hired for the purpose, I moved my tent and other belongings up to the saddle. My commissariat arrangements were simple mealie-meal and sugar, being all I required in the way of food. Bush tea grew all over the mountain ; I could pluck sackfuls of it within fifty feet of my tent.

I marked out the site for my reservoir just below the gravel deposit, at a spot where the fall of the hillside was about one in fifteen. Then I sank an approximately level trench, the upper end to be flush with the bottom of the reservoir, and the lower running out to the surface of the ground. In this I placed a long wooden box which was open at the lower end, and had a

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small flood-gate working in a vertical slide at the other.

I then excavated my reservoir, working longer hours than I have at any other time. When completed it was thirty-five feet long, ten broad, and four deep; but of course the holding capacity was much greater than these dimensions would imply, owing to the excavated ground being banked on the lower side, thus forming a dam wall.

I was quite alone, but I seldom felt lonely. I worked so hard that I slept soundly from the moment I finished supper until day broke. Sometimes I was so weary that I would fall asleep as I sat, with a half-consumed plate of porridge resting on my outstretched legs, and would wake up at dawn in this position.

The rains were overdue, but at first I did not mind this, because dry ground is easier to lift than wet, and I was anxious to have my reservoir completed before the heavy thunderstorms set in. At length the work was finished, so I set my sluice-box in position below the vent. Then I spent some days in opening out shallow trenches from the dam along the sides of the mountains to left and right, so as to catch the storm-water.

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But the rain still held off; an occasional thunderstorm would trail over the ranges, but none came to the saddle. Sometimes it was as though an invisible hand held them back; I had more than once seen a raincloud heading straight for the saddle, only to swerve to right or left, and pass—sometimes within a few hundred yards of it.

I loosened quantities of wash, and barrowed it to the sides of the trench in which my sluice-box lay embedded. I computed, taking the prospect I had as my basis, that there was upwards of two hundred pounds' worth of gold in those two heaps.

Having now come literally to the end of my resources, I again started carrying down stuff to the little spring and there panning it out. But the spring was failing on account of the drought, and the little puddled dam hardly collected enough water during the night to admit of panning. The result of a fortnight's unspeakably hard work was about four shillings' worth of gold. The trickle of water diminished daily, until the spring yielded barely enough for my drinking. Then my boots began to wear out under the strain of clambering up and down the steep, rocky path. So I plied my barrow barefoot, only using

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my boots when I went down to the spring for my daily supply of drinking-water.

Few (excluding, of course, those suffering from actual thirst) have ever longed for rain as I did. But the sky remained pitiless, and from my mountain eyry, I could see the valley bottoms growing sere and yellow. Then I suddenly turned against my work; for a few days despair and I tented together. I lost heart, for that Fate seemed to have declared against me. During previous seasons I had seen torrents foaming down the gorge from the saddle; the mountain-tops between which it lay had been the favourite haunts of thunderstorms. It was now late in December, and not a drop of rain had fallen. When I look back at myself then, from where I now am, I seem a very pathetic figure.

On Christmas Eve I struck my tent, packed my swag, and descended the mountain. The spot at which I expended so much useless labour has since become well-known as the Theta Mine, one of the best gold producers belonging to the Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Company.

Within a few days I unexpectedly became possessed of about £10. But I was at the end of my tether in the matter of mining. I made up my mind to leave the goldfields;

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to return to the old Cape Colony, via Natal, as a tramp.

So in the afternoon of the 3rd of January, 1876, I climbed up the long and steep mountain out of the valley of the Blyde River, along the very pathway by which "Artful Joe" and I had descended with our hearts full of hope. My dreams of affluence had eventuated in nothing; my hard work had been thrown away. Three times had fortune tantalized me by placing rich gifts almost within my reach and then snatching them from my outstretched hand.

When I reached the rocky summit I threw my heavy swag to the ground and gazed back with dimming eyes. . . . A lump rose in my throat. . . . It had, after all, been a man's life that I had led. I had made many friends and but few enemies.

As I gazed, the sun was low behind me, and the immense valley at my feet was filled with gloom. Deepening purple shadows were stealing up Pilgrim's Creek in a slow-brimming flood. Through this the scattered tents gleamed white, here and there a tiny sparklet showed where some digger was preparing his evening meal. . . . I knew the occupants of these tents; with some I had shared danger, with others toil.

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. . . I was loath to leave them all. . . . One last look—and the scene was obliterated by a sudden gush of tears.

Then I once more humped my swag and started on my long journey through the cool night, under the inscrutable stars.

CHAPTER XII

On the road—Heavy rain—Mosquitoes—Natal—Thunderstorms—A terrible night—Maritzburg—My cash runs out—A halcyon day—Hospitality—D'Urban—Failure to get work—The Fighting Blacksmith and the eccentric old gentleman—Narrow escape of the latter—East London—Experiences in a surf-boat—A perilous venture—I enter the Civil Service—Further reminiscences deferred—*Au revoir.*

My swag was heavy, but my frame was tough. It was early in the forenoon of the following day when I reached Lydenburg. Having had to purchase boots, socks, flannel shirts, and a waterproof, more than half of my £10 had melted away ; it would be necessary, therefore, to exercise the strictest economy.

From Lydenburg and through the Eastern Transvaal I was fortunate in finding wagons going Natalwards on which I could load my swag. Once or twice I got a lift myself—but this I was not particularly anxious for. I had my small Low Country tent with me. For its capacity this was the lightest thing of the kind

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I have ever seen. It weighed—with poles, pegs, and whipcord guys—about six pounds. Its height was two feet six inches; its poles were of bamboo which had been split in two and rejoined, the split pieces being relatively reversed. Its pegs were made of a very hard but comparatively light wood which I had found in one of the forests of the Blyde River Valley.

When about half-way to the Natal border I encountered heavy rain. One-tenth of the thunderstorms that broke over my luckless head would, had they but visited the mountain saddle a couple of weeks previously, have made an independent man of me. This was quite typical of my luck.

Mosquitoes were a terrible plague in the Transvaal. I shall never forget my experiences one night close to the source of the Vaal River. The sun was hardly down before the tormentors came out in myriads. They seemed to thrive on smoke; at all events they were less incommoded by it than I was. I closed my tent up tightly and placed some live embers inside. On these I laid some tobacco and damp grass, at the same time pulling at my pipe as furiously as I could. But all was in vain; the wretched insects crowded in as though they enjoyed the dense reek.

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Although dead tired after an exceptionally fatiguing day, I struck the tent, repacked my swag, and tramped on until morning. Then I left the road and made for a kopje about a mile away, on which were some very large rocks. I flung myself down under a ledge, and was fast asleep almost before I reached a recumbent position. It was late in the afternoon when I was awakened by the heat of the sun. Then, after a hearty meal of *askoek* and tea, I tramped on again until another morning broke.

I passed Laing's Nek and Majuba Hill, the slopes of which were destined within a few years to flow with the blood of brave men, and to be the scene of feats of arms which startled the world, and, in a certain respect, revolutionized warfare. But it was water that was there flowing on the day I passed, for the whole range was lashed by a succession of furious thunderstorms.

From Newcastle onward I adopted a different system—one which enabled me to travel much more quickly. At Newcastle I went to the Resident Magistrate's office, and through the police secured the services of a strong native to act as carrier of my swag as far as Ladismith. I left ten shillings—the amount of remuneration agreed

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upon—with the Chief Constable, to be drawn when the native returned with a note from me certifying that he had done his duty. It was a wonderful relief to be free from the straps which had galled my shoulders for so long. The distance to Ladismith is, I think, about a hundred miles. We covered it easily in three nights.

At Ladismith I disposed of my tent for ten shillings, which was less than a quarter of its value. But my money was rapidly running out ; the heavy rains had on several occasions driven me to ask for shelter, and this always meant spending money. At Ladismith I engaged another native to accompany me to Maritzburg. This was necessary ; had I attempted to travel alone I should certainly have lost my way.

The heat—for it was now midsummer—was extremely trying. I accordingly made it my rule to travel by night, trusting to being able to get a sheltered place wherein to sleep by day. This kind of accommodation—which I was usually fortunate in being able to secure—did not cost anything. When I bought food at a farmhouse I would usually ask to be allowed to lie down in one of the sheds.

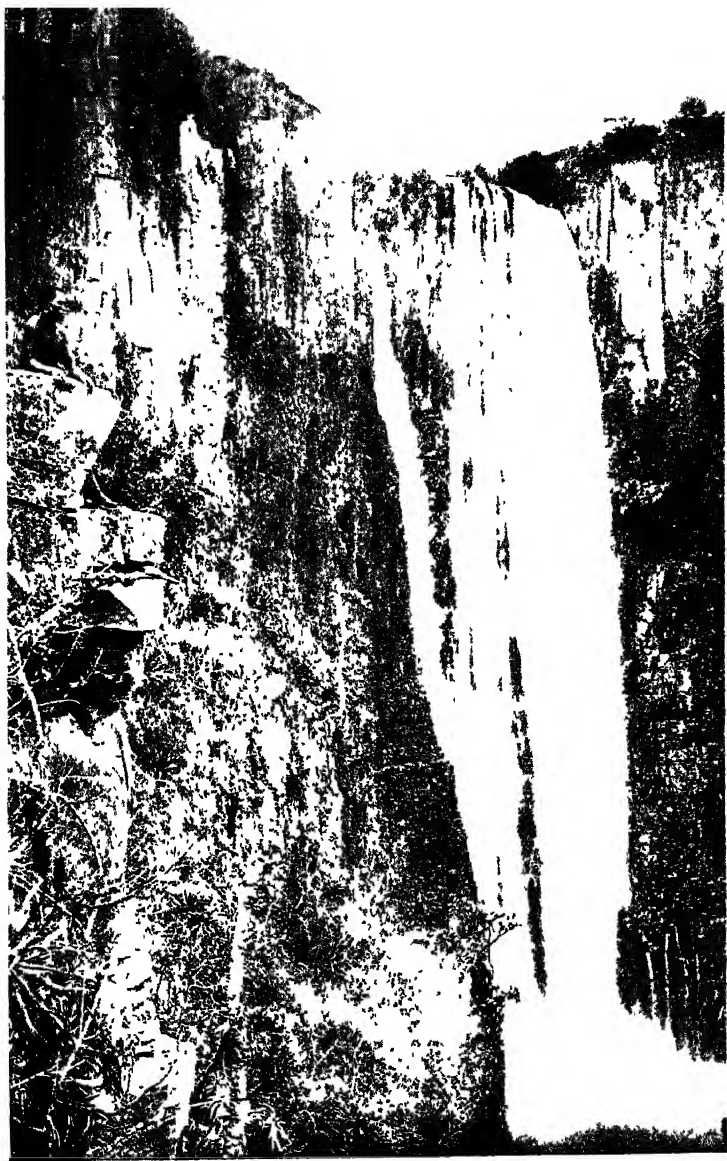
The thunderstorms were a serious embarrassment. In the comparatively flat Transvaal they

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did not matter so much, but among the convoluted hills which are such a salient feature of the Natal landscape, some kloof which ordinarily held a mere rivulet was apt to be suddenly filled by a roaring torrent. Occasionally I was hung up for hours at a time by such obstacles.

At a small village, the name of which I forget, but which must have been about forty miles from Maritzburg on the Ladismith side, I was detained for two days by a cold, drenching rain. I was forced to take refuge in the hotel. Here the cost of accommodation for myself and my bearer depleted my capital almost to vanishing-point.

The weather cleared, and I made another start, but the condition of the roads was such that I was unable to travel at more than half my usual rate. Next day, just after I crossed the Umgeni River, the rain came down again. I intended to get to Maritzburg that night, but was only able to reach the heights from which that town is visible. We entered the forest on the left-hand side of the road and camped. After enormous difficulty we managed to kindle a fire and make some tea. There was plenty of dead wood lying about, so we made a roaring blaze and sat as close to it as we could. That night was a miser-



FALLS OF THE UMGANI, NATAL

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able one ; the rain never ceased for a moment, so sleep was quite out of the question.

It was still raining when we started next morning. We reached Maritzburg after a tramp of a couple of hours. I went to an hotel on the market square, kept by a man named King. He promptly refused to take me in ; this did not surprise me in the least, for I must have been a sorry object. However, on my explaining the situation and producing my few remaining shillings, the proprietor relented so far as to let me have some food and allow me to sleep in a forage store. He nevertheless insisted on taking away my pipe, tobacco, and matches. He wanted to lock me in, but this I would not stand. I slept warm and dry, at least, I was dry when I awoke next morning.

In the afternoon the rain ceased, so I again set out. My capital was now reduced to one and ninepence. Just before sundown I called at a farmhouse a few hundred yards from the road and asked for work. Here I was kindly entertained, and given a corner of an outhouse wherein to sleep, and some bags and straw wherewith to make a bed. But I insisted on paying for my entertainment by working. Before darkness fell I mended a fowlhouse, and I got up

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early in the morning and chopped a lot of fire-wood.

After a hearty breakfast of delicious bread, butter, and milk I made another start. But that day I loitered. The sky was bright, the sun shone mildly, the wind was warm and caressing. I wandered slowly along, enjoying the incomparable scenery, and feeling that the world, which had hitherto shown me its rough side, was not such a bad place after all. I began seriously to regard the universe from the standpoint of a professional tramp—to realize that there is something to be said for the philosophy of the unmitigated vagrant.

At an especially enticing spot I turned out of the road and strolled for a while along the bank of a stream. I stripped and plunged into a swirling pool. Then I washed my entire wardrobe and spread it out on the grass to dry. I lit my pipe, laid myself naked under an erythrina-tree, and praised the gods for the gift of life.

When my clothes were sufficiently dry I dressed and went on. It was now fairly late in the afternoon. I caught sight of another farmhouse, so I went to it. The menfolk were away, but a dear old lady of ample proportions and kindly countenance was standing in her garden mourn-

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ing the damage wrought therein by the heavy weather of the past week. I asked for a spade and a rake ; within little more than an hour I had vastly improved things. Vegetables and flowers, which grew side by side in an eccentric jumble, had been flattened out by the rain into a wallow of mud. I obtained the cover of a packing-case ; this I split up, and a judicious use of the fragments, together with some string, soon showed that little irreparable damage had been done.

Two small children, a boy and a girl—they were grandchildren of the old lady—made my task entertaining by virtue of their quaint and original talk. However, they rather embarrassed me by bringing quantities of biscuits and coffee, being distressed when I was unable to consume all. At dusk the proprietor of the farm, with his wife and a baby, returned in a cart. They warmly seconded the old lady's invitation for me to stay over the night. So I slept in a real bed—an experience I had not enjoyed for years. I hope that kindly roof-tree still stands firm, and that the little children have not alone prospered, but taken after their immediate forbears.

Next morning I started very early, for I felt I had dawdled enough. I passed down the long,

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lovely Intshanga Ridge, and must have walked well, for I reached Pine Town fairly early in the afternoon. Here I met a man whose name I have forgotten; he also was about to walk to D'Urban. We did not, however, go together, for the reason that I had made up my mind to go by a direct route over the Berea, whilst he had some special reason for taking a more round-about course.

I passed a number of coolie huts, each standing in a little pineapple patch. I spent ninepence of my capital in the purchase of a dozen pines, getting three separate lots of four at threepence per lot. It was late in the afternoon when I reached D'Urban. The date was the 27th of January, so I had spent twenty-four days on the road. Considering the weather I had encountered, I had not done so badly. Next morning I read in a newspaper that the man with whom I had foregathered on the previous day had died from the effects of the bite of a mamba; the reptile had attacked him as he was walking through the bush close to the town.

I knew two men at D'Urban. One was Mr. Jack Ellis, at present of the firm of Dyer and Dyer, East London. The other was a man named Sims, who had been known on the

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diamond-fields as "The Fighting Blacksmith." He was of small stature, but possessed great strength, and was skilled in the use of his fists. Mr. Ellis was in those days not by any means the prosperous merchant he is to-day. Nevertheless he gave me what assistance he could, and thus earned a claim on my gratitude which I shall not forget.

Sims was working at his trade, but was not making more than a bare living. I walked from one end of D'Urban to the other looking for work, but times were bad and employment correspondingly scarce. Besides, I knew no trade but mining, and was utterly without such education as would have fitted me for office employment.

Three dolorous weeks I spent at D'Urban. Once I got a job with a roustabout gang ballasting a ship, but the wages were only two shillings a day; besides, the job did not last. The problem for me to solve was, how to get away to East London. Once there I would be with my family. Every morning I would go to Sims's shop to see if he had succeeded in getting me anything to do.

At length—tidings of joy—Sims thought he had secured for me a suitable billet. Could I drive

Reminiscences of a

four horses in a cart, he asked? Well, I had certainly driven a pair of mules in a Scotch cart with fair success—and I could, in a way, handle a team of oxen. But when Sims explained the situation further, my heart sank. An eccentric old gentleman, lately from England, had purchased a cart and four and wanted some one to drive him to King William's Town. This meant traversing the Native Territories, where, at that period, the present fine highways were not in existence. In fact, the only roads were, as I happened to know, a series of criss-cross tracks leading from one trading station to another over an extremely mountainous country. And I had never driven two—much less four—horses in my life.

However, beggars cannot be choosers; moreover, Sims appeared to consider that I was unduly conscientious. He thought I should be able to learn how to handle my team before starting. Besides, the practice I would get in driving over the high-roads of Natal before reaching the more difficult country ought to make me an efficient whip. There was something in this idea, and if Sims and the old gentleman were prepared to take the risks, why should not I? So a bargain was struck, and I was provisionally

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hired. My remuneration was to be £5 for the trip, plus all expenses while on the road.

But o' nights I used to be harassed by doubts. Which was most likely to be the result, I would ask myself, assassination or suicide? Most probably both, conscience would shriek. However, Providence occasionally interferes to protect the innocent; the old gentleman trod on the edge of a step and sprained his ankle severely. Thus do unspeakably great blessings sometimes come painfully disguised. That eccentric old gentleman little knew that in twisting his ankle he was saving his neck.

There was no hope of his immediate recovery. To an elderly person a sprained ankle necessitates lying up for weeks. The steamer for East London, the old *Basuto*, was due in a few days. I could not bear the thought of hanging on any longer in idleness, so inquired as to where the agency of the Union Line was to be found. Then I boldly presented myself before Mr. Escombe, the agent, explained the plight I was in, and asked him to let me have, on credit, a deck passage to East London.

Fortunately Mr. Escombe knew something of my people. He invited me to sit down, and seemed interested when I told him something of

Reminiscences of a

my adventures. He let me have the passage-ticket on credit, I promising to remit the price out of the first money I earned. So next day I embarked on board the *Basuto*, and in the afternoon of the day following reached my destination.

After a short visit to Breidbach, near King William's Town, where my people were at that time staying, I returned to East London and entered the service of the boating company. The work was not congenial. For one thing, although sea-sickness has never troubled me on board ship, I was constantly ill when in a lighter. Moreover, the boatmen with whom I had constantly to associate were unintermittently foul-mouthed and blasphemous. I was not easily shocked; the men with whom I had for years foregathered were much given to realism of speech, as well as to picturesquely lurid verbal illustration. But this was different; the language of these men was crammed with filth for filth's sake, and flat, pointless profanity. I have no doubt that my inability to avoid expressing disgust made them worse than they otherwise would have been.

It was my habit to get up at 2.30 a.m., breakfast on coffee and bread, and then report myself at the wharf, where I was due at 3 a.m. About half an hour later we would man a lighter, pick

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up a thick Manila rope from the bottom of the river, lay it between the chocks, and haul out across the bar to the roadstead where the ships were anchored. From the main warp others branched off in various directions, and by means of one of these we would get as close to the ship which we were discharging as we could. Then the lighter would be towed alongside.

All going well, we were usually back at the wharf at 2.30 p.m. with the boat loaded. But things did not invariably go well ; the wind had a habit of springing up suddenly, and the breakers on the bar would follow suit. Under such circumstances we often had to cast off from the vessel's side and anchor in a tumbling sea, with only a small portion of the appointed cargo on board. Perhaps, if it were not considered too dangerous, Captain Jackson might come out with the harbour tug and tow us in ; otherwise we ran the risk of having to remain all night on the lighter.

The work was apt to be very dangerous indeed. It was nothing so very unusual for a boat to capsize on the bar and for half the crew to be drowned. Once only had I to swim for my life ; on that occasion all in the boat escaped. But a few weeks afterwards a lighter capsized under

Reminiscences of a

almost similar circumstances, and either four or five of those on board lost their lives.

My most striking experience in this connection happened one day towards the end of my term of service with the boating company. We were alongside a French vessel, the *Notre Dame de la Garde*, taking in boxes of Gossage's blue-mottled soap. Before we had received more than a quarter of our appointed cargo, the wind and the sea rose suddenly together. We had to cast off from the vessel, and in getting clear the lighter shipped some water. Before we got the hatches fixed, a number of the boxes had broken up, and the fragments, mixed with bars of soap, were awash. It was about eight o'clock in the morning when we cast loose and dropped our anchor.

The wind increased to a gale; this brought a bitterly cold rain. We bobbed and curtsied at the end of our cable until about four in the afternoon, listening to Gossage's products churning and lathering down below. It grew colder and colder; we were wet to the skin and almost numbed. A consultation was held, and it was unanimously decided that the risk of drowning was preferable to the certainty of slowly perishing to death; therefore we would make a dash for the harbour.

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To use the warp was, of course, out of the question, so we rigged a sail from the big hatchway tarpaulin. We lashed the hatch-battens together in the form of a parallelogram, fastened the sail to this, and stayed the structure by means of various devices. We slipped our cable and made for the bar. Wind, tide, and sea were all with us; had the tide been unfavourable, the attempt would have spelt almost certain death.

There was more than a mile of open sea between where we had anchored and the breakers. The port-office signals were against us, but what did we care? When people on shore realized what we were attempting, they came down by hundreds, in spite of the rain, and thronged the breakwaters on either side of the harbour entrance.

We ran gallantly, straight before the wind. I never thought a lighter could sail as ours did. As good luck would have it, we reached the worst part of the bar just after one bad set of breakers had passed, and before the arrival of the next. But there was no child's play in the matter. We had one very tense moment; the boat was flung sideways in the turmoil, and nearly got taken aback. However, a providential buffet on the port bow gave us a set in the right direction;

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once more our tarpaulin filled, and we drew slowly and laboriously out of the area of danger. I looked back and saw the angry combers roaring after us, as though enraged at our escape. As we ran into the harbour, the people who were watching cheered themselves hoarse.

Upwards of four months were spent at this purgatorial work. Then release came unexpectedly. One day I got a letter from the Civil Commissioner, Mr. Orpen, asking me to call at his office. I went, and to my amazement he read me a telegram from Captain Mills, who was then Under-Colonial Secretary, offering me the post of clerk on probation to the Resident Magistrate of Tarka, with a salary of £120 per annum.

Were I now to be offered the Prime Ministership of the Union my surprise would hardly be greater than it then was. Curiously enough I was on the same day offered a post in a mercantile firm, that of Joseph Walker & Sons, at a salary of £7 per month. But, for family reasons, the difference of £3 per month was just then an important consideration, so I accepted the first offer, a step I have ever since regretted.

I had grave doubts as to my ability to do the duties required of me. While at East London I had worked every day at a copy-book, striving

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to improve my handwriting, but my fingers were more at home with the trigger and the pick than with the pen. Moreover, my spelling was phonetic and wonderful. Although I knew most of Shakespeare's sonnets by heart, I did not know a single rule of English grammar. This ignorance has remained with me to the present day, but I cannot say I feel it much of a handicap. However, there was no examination to pass, and my chief would have to put up with my shortcomings for the present. I had faced lions on the Lebomba and crocodiles in the Komati; why should I quail before a mere magistrate?

It may be advisable to explain how my appointment came to be offered. My father and the then Lord Carnarvon, who happened to be Colonial Secretary, had been friends in the old days. Lord Carnarvon wrote to Government House, Cape Town, asking that something might be done for us. My father was beyond the age-limit; I, clearly, was not. Responsible Government had arrived; nevertheless, a certain amount of informal patronage was still occasionally exercised.

Thus it was that I, after a strange and varied apprenticeship in some of the roughest of life's workshops, became clogged down as a little wheel

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in that clumsy, expensive, and circumlocutory mill, which, consuming much grist but producing little meal, is still believed to be an indispensable adjunct to our civilization.

Here I must break off. But my reminiscences are by no means complete ; some day—and I trust before very long—they will be brought up to date.

Whether or not the supplementary volume will reach the printer's hands, depends on how far the public becomes interested in the work of which I am now writing the last words of the closing chapter.

After careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that so long as the official collar galls my neck, I cannot adequately deal with the period during which I have been a public servant ; I would have to walk too delicately.* For one of the disadvantages of being in the public service lies in the circumstance that it is impossible to speak or write of experiences gained therein, without embarrassing reserve.

But the days of my retirement are rapidly drawing nigh ; when they arrive, and the collar drops, I shall have much to say about many

* I have since modified this decision.

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things, for my life as a public servant during six-and-thirty years has been an interesting one. Most of it has been spent in places as far as possible from centres where conventionality reigns.

My still unrecorded experiences include: *inter alia*, war, hunting, the administration of native tribes in remote areas, roving under special commission in those waterless regions to the north-west—through which the boundary common to British and German territory runs — and perhaps most interesting of all, a microscopic study of human infusoria inhabiting isolated and therefore stagnant towns and hamlets.

I intend to retire soon with a typewriting machine and some beehives, to a little farm I have acquired in a sleepy locality on the south coast. There I hope to be spared for some few years to develop the economic products of the honey-bee, to meditate on the Universal Postulate, and to watch, from afar, my children cultivating the difficult fields of Experience. May their task be easier than mine has been!

Having thus taken the public into my confidence, I will say

•

L'ENVOI

As a pack of wolves is the hungry Past ;
It hunts Man laden with hopes and fears ;
Its bay swells loud with the hasting years,
Till the red fangs sink in his flank at last.

The bay grows louder, the flame-ringed ecn
Glow with greed as the night sinks, black ;
Swerve and double—still o'er your track
The pitiless, questing nostrils lean.

Mark, O brothers, before I fall,
I fling this sheaf of script to your care ;
Take and read it ; I fain would share
My scanty gatherings with you all.

With all—with the hunted, whose eyes search
mine
In vain for the hint of a 'scaping clue ;
With those still transc'd, where the skies
bedew
The half-op'd blossoms that round them shine.

L'Envoi

Take my sheaf—it was gleaned with toil
From fields now dimm'd in a long-spel'd day ;
In a clime where naught but dim shadows
stray—
Yet its grain may sprout from a kindly soil.

THE END.

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